

CLEANINGS FROM INDIAN CLASSICS.

VOL. III.

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# GLEANINGS

FROM

## INDIAN CLASSICS

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# PROPHETS OF IND.

## PREFACE.

The third volume of the "Gleanings" is out. We cannot sufficiently express our gratitude towards our readers for the very kind reception they have given to the previous two volumes of our humble attempts to popularise Indian mythology and religion. We sincerely hope that the third volume the "Prophets" would receive the same kind reception as its elder sisters did.

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To

Babu Bharani Kant

Lahiri Dhouhury.

The most enlightened & liberal

Beminder of Kalipur

in the District of

Maimansing.

This little work is affectionately

dedicated as a token of

friendship by the

Editor.

## INTRODUCTION

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The earliest record of religion that we meet with in the pages of history or even in the annals of nations is that of the Hindus. Before the religions of Egypt or Greece or Rome were ever heard of, the religion of the Hindus had already grown to be a great structure.

The Religion of the Hindus is not only the oldest religion of the world, but it is the most novel religion amongst all the religions of the civilised societies. It is not like the old religions of Egypt, Greece or Rome; it is not like the modern religions of the Christians or of the Mahomedans. It is not one religion,—it is not one structure. It might be compared with an oriental palace, matchless in beauty and grandeur and uncomparable in extensiveness. It is like the palace, which if seen from a distance will appear to be but one stupendous building, but if examined closely, and if seen from the foot of its walls, it would appear to be a pile of buildings, one rising above the other.

The Religion of the Hindus is not one religion, It is a mass of religions, all grouped together and



arranged according to their different characteristics. By the word religion we generally understand one theology and one mythology of a particular sect, but by the word Hindu religion none should understand one theology or one mythology. It is infinite in everything,—its mythology is as extensive as its theology, its *Shastras* are as innumerable as its gods and goddesses.

Is then Hinduism a mass of superstitions? Is then the boasted religion of the Hindus nothing but a group of the grossest paganism? It is neither superstition nor paganism. It is something so very grand that it is impossible to understand it, unless one devotes much of his time and labour to fathom its unfathomable depth of sublimity.

It is better for us to quote the most excellent address delivered before the Parliament of Religions in Chicago by one who has not only read the Hindu *Shastras* through and through but who has realised the highest ideal of the religion of the great *Rishis*. Perhaps it is the best sketch of Hinduism that was ever written or told.

"The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas. They hold that the Vedas are without beginning and without end. It may sound ludicrous to this audience, how a book can be without beginning or end. But

by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical and spiritual relations between souls and souls and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits were there before their discovery and would remain even if we forgot them. The discoverers of these laws are called Rishis, and we honour them as perfected beings,\* and I am glad to tell this audience that some of the very best of them were women.

Here it may be said that the law as laws may be without end, but they must have had a beginning. The Vedas teach us that creation is without beginning or end. Science has proved to us that the sum total of the cosmic energy is the same throughout all. Then if there was a time where nothing existed, where was all this manifested energy? Some say it was in a potential form in God. But then God is sometimes potential and sometimes kinetic, which would make him mutable, and everything mutable is a compound, and everything compound must undergo that change which is called destruction. Therefore God would die

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some idiots, and only drag on a miserable existence. Why, if they are all created, does a just and merciful God create one happy and other unhappy—why is he so partial? Nor would it mend matters in the least by holding that those that are miserable in this life will be perfect in a future. Why should a man be miserable here in the reign of a just and merciful God? It does not give us any cause, but simply a cruel act of an all-powerfull being, and therefore unscientific. There must have been causes, then, to make a man miserable or happy before his birth, and those were *his past actions*. Are not all the tendencies of the mind and those of the body answered for by inherited aptitude from parents? Here are the two parallel lines of existence,—one that of the mind, the other that of matter. If matter and its transformation answer for all that we have, there is no necessity of supposing the existence of a soul. But it cannot be proved that thought has been evolved out of matter, and if a philosophical monism is inevitable, spiritual monism is certainly logical and no less desirable.

We cannot deny that bodies inherit certain tendencies from heredity, but these tendencies only mean the secular configuration, through which a peculiar mind alone can act in a peculiar way

present is determined by our past actions, and the future will be by the present; that it will go on evolving up or reverting back from birth to birth and death to death. But here is another question. Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions,—a powerless, helpless wreck in an ever-raging, ever-rushing, uncompromising current of cause and effect—a little moth placed under the wheel of causation, which rolls on crushing everything in its way, and waits not for the widow's tears or the orphan's cry? The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape? Was the cry that went up from the bottom of the heart of despair. It reached the throne of mercy, and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a Vedic sage, and he stood up before the world and in trumpet voice proclaimed the glad tidings to the world. "Hear ye children of immortal bliss, even ye that reside in higher spheres, I have found the Ancient One, who is beyond all darkness, all delusions, and knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again. Children of immortal bliss, what a sweet, what a hopeful name!" Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name,

word they use is therefore *mukti*—freedom, freedom from the bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery.

And this bondage can only fall off through the mercy of God, and this mercy comes on the pure, so purity is the condition of his mercy. How that mercy acts? He reveals himself to the pure heart, and the pure and the stainless man sees God, yea even in this life, and then, and then only all the crookedness of the heart is made straight. Then all doubt ceases. He is no more the freak of a terrible law of causation. So this is the very centre, the very vital conception of Hinduism. The Hindu does not want to live upon words and theories—if there are existences beyond the ordinary sensual existence, he wants to come face to face with them. If there is a soul in him which is not matter, if there is an all merciful universal soul, he will go to him direct. He must see him, and that alone can destroy all doubts. So the best proof a Hindu sage gives about the soul, about God, is "I have seen the soul; I have seen God." And that is the only condition of perfection. The Hindu religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing; not in believing, but in being and becoming.

So the whole struggle in their system is a constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God, and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect, even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes the the religion of the Hindus.

And what becomes of man when he becomes perfect? He lives a life of bliss, infinite. He enjoys infinite and perfect bliss, having obtained the only thing in which man ought to have pleasure, God, and enjoys the bliss with God. So far all the Hindus are agreed. This is the common religion of all the sects of India; but then the question comes, perfection is absolute, and the absolute cannot be two or three. It cannot have any qualities. It cannot be an individual. And so when a soul becomes perfect and absolute, it must become one with Brahma, and he would only realize the Lord as the perfection, the reality, of his own nature and existence, the existence absolute, knowledge absolute, and life absolute.

If it is happiness to enjoy the consciousness of this small body, it must be more happiness to enjoy the consciousness of two bodies, so three, four, five; and the aim, the ultimate of happiness would be reached when it would become a universal consciousness. Therefore, to gain this infinite

universal individuality must go. Then alone can death cease when I am one with life, then alone can misery cease when I am one with happiness itself; then alone can all errors cease when I am one with knowledge itself; and it is the necessary scientific conclusion, science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is one little continuously changing body, in an unbroken ocean of matter, and the Adwaitam is the necessary conclusion with my other counterpart mind.

Science is nothing but the finding of unity, and as any science can reach the perfect unity, it would stop from further progress, because it would reach the goal; thus chemistry cannot progress farther, when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfil its services in discovering one energy of which all the others are but the manifestations, and the science of religion becomes perfect when it discovers Him who is the one life in a universe of death; Him who is the constant basis of an everchanging world; One who is the only soul of which all souls are but delusive manifestations. Thus was it, through multiplicity and duality, the ultimate unity was reached, and religion can go no farther, and this

ds the goal of all, again and again, science after science, again and again.

And all science is bound to come to this conclusion in the long run. Manifestation, and not creation, is the world of science to-day, and he is only glad that what he had cherished in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in some forcible language, and with further light by the latest conclusions of science.

Descend we now from the aspirations of philosophy to the religion of the ignorant? On the very outset, I may tell you that there is no polytheism in India. In every temple, if one stands by and listens, he will find the worshippers applying all the attributes of God, including Omnipresence, to these images.

The tree is known by its fruits; and when I have seen amongst them that are called idolatrous men, the like of whom in morality and spirituality and love, I have never seen anywhere, I stop and ask myself, Can sin beget holiness?

As we find that somehow or another, by the laws of our constitution, we have got to associate our ideas of infinity with the ideal of blue sky, or a sea; the omnipresence, covering the idea of holiness with an idol of a church or a mosque, or a cross so the Hindus have associated the ideas



of holiness, purity, truth omnipresence, and all other ideas with different images and forms. But with this difference; upon certain actions some are drawn their whole lives to their idol of a church and never rise higher, because with them religion means an intellectual assent to certain doctrines and doing good to their fellows. The whole religion of the Hindu is centered in realization. Man is to become divine, realizing the divine, and, therefore, idol or temple or church or books, are only the supports, the helps of his spiritual childhood, but on and on he must progress.

He must not stop anywhere; "external worship, material worship," says the Vadas "is the lowest stage; struggling to rise high, mental prayer is the next stage, but the highest stage is when the Lord has been realized." Mark the same earnest man who was kneeling before the idol tell you hereafter of struggles, "Him the sun cannot express, nor the moon nor the stars, the lightning cannot express Him, nor what we speak of fire; through Him they all shine." But with this difference, he does not abuse the images or call it sin. He recognizes in it a necessary stage of his life.

But if a man can realize his divine nature with the help of an image, would it be right to call it

a sin? Nor even when he has passed that stage that he should call it an error. To the Hindu man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions from the lowest sectichism to the highest absolutism mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite, determined by the condition of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress, and every soul is a child eagle soaring higher and higher; gathering more and more strength till it reaches the religious sun.

Unity in variety is the plan of nature, and the Hindu has recognized it. Every other religion lays down certain amount of fixed dogma, and tries to force the whole society through it. They lay down before society one coat which must fit Jack and Job, and Henry, all alike. If it does not fit John or Henry, they must go without coat to cover body. They have discovered that the absolute can only be realized or thought of or stated through the relative, and the image, cross or crescent are simply so many centers,—so many pegs to help the spiritual idea on. It is not that this help is necessary for every one, but for many, and those that do not need it, have no right to say that it is wrong.

thing the same truth reigns; the Lord has declared to the Hindu his incarnation as Krishna, "I am in every religion as the thread through string of pearls. And wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know ye that I am there." And what was the result! *Through the whole order of Sanskrit Philosophy, I challenge anybody to find any such expression as that the Hindu only would be saved and not others. Says Vyas, "We find perfect men even beyond the pale of our caste and creed."*

The above short sketch of Hinduism might be called as the true essence and true spirit of the religion of the Hindus. But this religion is not like other religions formed by one man or at one time, it has been gradually formed through the course of many thousand years. It has been formulated by many prophets born at different times and by many sages and saints. It would much help our readers to understand it more clearly if we give a short historical and chronological account of this great and grand religion. Following the footsteps of other great writers we shall divide the entire period of the rise and development of Hinduism into seven epochs. Each epoch has its different literature and different

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\* beauties of Nature, they praised the omnipotence of the Spirit that ruled and guided that nature ; they were the *first men amongst mankind to conceive and to feel the existence of the Universal Spirit,—the Spirit which is the beginning and the end of creation* On one hand they rose in spirituality and on the other they advanced in civilization. Thus passed away more than five hundred years ; the Hindus advanced in every way and the first seed of religion was sown by the innumerable songs of the Rig Veda, composed and sung by different men in different places, all breathing more or less the spirit of love and veneration to that Supreme Being who rules over the infinite universe.

Thus ended, it might be said, the first period of the Hindu religion. Next we find that the Hindus were not satisfied by singing the praise of God or by expressing in *sweet poesy the love and veneration that they bore for Him*. They had been gradually laid away to a higher aspiration,—an aspiration to get nearer to the great Spirit, whose universe is so grand, sublime and beautiful. Many of the thoughtful men amongst them had turned their mind to find out the means to get nearer to God and happiness. Two different classes of men were following two different paths to reach the goal which was the aim of all.

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Thus ended, it might be said, the first period of the Hindu religion. Next we find that the Hindus were not satisfied by singing the praise of God or by expressing in sweet poetry the love and veneration that they bore for Him. They had been gradually laid away to a higher aspiration,—an aspiration to get nearer to the great Spirit, whose universe is so grand, sublime and beautiful. Many of the thoughtful men amongst them had turned their mind to find out the means to get nearer to God and happiness. Two different classes of men were following two different paths to reach the goal which was the aim of all.

One class wrote works after works formulating innumerable ceremonies, which they declared, would purify the mind, beget virtue and lead men to heaven. But the other class gave little importance to the ceremonies and took a line of works which might be called the first birth of philosophy in the world. One tried to reach God by visible works, the others by mental culture. But both were nothing but the second steps in the developement of the Hindu Religion.

Both parties have left behind them two different literatures; one of them is known by the name of *Bramhanas* and the other by *Upanishads*.

This period extended for more than five hundred years and from the literature of the period we can very distinctly see that the Hindus had advanced much further on in the path of progress and civilisation. They had extended their settlements further eastwards and had taken possession of the beautiful and the most fertile valley of the *Ganges* and the *Yamuna*. They had established different kingdoms with big and flourishing cities and had made much progress in every department of literature, science and arts.

Thus ended the second period of Hinduism, and it entered into its third epoch which was the most brilliant age not only of the religion of the Hindus,

but of all that constitute civilisation and progress. This is the age when the Hindu race became the master of India from the hoary Himalayas to the dark blue sea; this is the age when great kingdoms flourished and powerful potentates ruled,—this is the age when the great battle of Kurukhetra was fought and the greatest of all great prophets, *Srikrishna* was born; this is the age when Yaska wrote his *Nirukta* and *Panini* his grammar, this is the age when *Patanjali* wrote his *Yoga* and *Kapila* his *Shankya* philosophy, this is the age when *Vaṣya* compiled the Vedas and *Valmiki* wrote his *Ramayana*. When all the world was grovelling in darkness, the Hindu race lived in a high state of civilization and progress. Unlike the preceeding two epochs of the Hindu religion we shall calculate the age of this period as not less than one thousand years. Its beginning was the birth of *Kapila* and other philosophers, its middle was the battle of Kurukhetra, its end was the rise of Buddhism.

The fourth period of Hinduism is its passing through Buddhism. It is the general belief that Buddhism is quite a distinct religion. Nothing could be more erroneous than this opinion. We have tried to show later on that the Buddha preached the same religion as that of *Sreekrishna*.



Buddhism flourished in India more than a thousand years,—the period of Buddhism is the period of the highest state of Hindu civilisation. ••

But with the end of the Buddhistic period came a time which was a great change. It was a time of transition. As on one hand the religion of the Hindus gradually expanded and grew in strength and sublimity, so on the other the Hindu civilisation grew on age and attained dotage.

The fifth epoch began in great brilliancy, but ended in great darkness. It began with the reign of Vikramaditya and the birth of Sankaracharya, it ended with the conquest of India by the moslem invaders. This period extended over seven hundred years; the first two hundred years were of all brilliancy, the last five hundred were total darkness. This period might be termed the Pauranic period;—innumerable Puranas were written to extend the influence of Hinduism amongst the masses,—but all were in vain;—the Hindu civilisation fell from its ethereal height and darkness came where celestial light reigned.

The sixth epoch of Hinduism is the Mahomedan period. Even in darkness many sages and saints were born and many attempts were made to extend the light of Hinduism that was beset by ignorance of darkness. The Hindu civilization

died, the Hindu supremacy was gone, but the Hindu religion did not succumb to the all-devouring encroachment of all destroying Time. Indeed it vanished from the external world, it disappeared from the general society, which was full of internal dissension and insurmountable ignorance and superstition, but still it lived and grew in the hearts of a few who lived far away from these broils and dissensions of the Society. Silently it grew and silently it extended. Worse than can be said of it was that it was in a dormant state. But it did not remain long in such a state. It suddenly rose up and roared like a lion which was not dead but was merely asleep. After a thousand years' sleep it shone in its own old brilliancy under the banner of *Nemai Chaitanya*.

The last epoch of Hinduism is the modern age. In its sixth epoch it met one of the most powerful religions on the earth, namely Mahomedanism,—in its last epoch it met with the most enlightened and the most brilliant religion of the present age, namely Christianity, but neither of them had been able to kill it. They had rather helped her to develop herself and to give fresh strength and grandeur.

Our opinion is that Hinduism is growing and developing. It was born with the sweet and sublime songs of the Vedas,—it manifested itself

through the truth and teachings of *Srikrishna*, it developed to the highest state of perfection by the birth of *Goutam Buddha*.

It then passed through a great crisis by the formation of many religions and by the supremacy of superstition and ignorance, but it gained its old strength by the birth of *Nemai Chaitanya*.

Hinduism is not the religion of one sect or of one cast as the general belief is. It is the religion for all,—it is the religion for all humanity. When all the world became one country by steamship and railways, and by commerce and conquests, one more prophet was again born to declare that Hinduism is the religion for all humanity. Hinduism is not what generally people take it for, Hinduism is not caste system or the priestly bigotry,—it is not the religion of the ignorant or the unholy,—it is the religion formulated by the prophets, saints and sages. Therefore if any one want to know and to study and to grasp and to feel the religion of the Hindus, he should study the teachings of the great prophets, sages and saints, who were the incarnations of the great Spirit and whose sayings are the infinite Vedas which is nothing but the revelations vouchsafed by the unknowable and ever merciful Father of the Universe.

The difficulty in understanding the religion of the Hindus is that it has three-fold aspects. All other religions have only one aspect, but Hinduism has three distinct features. These three might be termed the three great steps to attain salvation. The first is sacrifices, pujas &c., that is all that is done with the help of material objects. The second is mental culture, such as cultivating good qualities, subjugating bad passions and ennobling the mind in every way. The third is spiritual communion.

The first two are denied by the other chief religions of the world, the last has mere a half-hearted support from them. They gave prominence to mental culture and consider it to be the chief means to give virtue and through virtue to salvation. But the Hindus consider all the three equally prominent and important. This is to be real difference between Hinduism and other religions: and this is the reason why Hinduism is the most misunderstood of all the religions of the world.

In this little book we have attempted to place before our readers short biographies and the teachings of some of the great prophets of Hinduism. We do not aspire to hope that we have been able to do justice to the great and inspired men, the narratives of whose lives we have ventured to

place before our readers ; but however defective and imperfect our attempts might be, we hope they will give some idea of the grandeur of Hinduism and will be able to remove at least a few of the false impressions that generally is to be found amongst men of the civilised world.





# THE PROPHETS OF IND.

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## THE PROPHETS.

{ 1 }

**H**E who studies Nature is a scientist and he who paints her is a poet. A scientist points out the value of natural objects,—a poet does their beauties. A scientist is the result of study, but a poet is a genius. We find hundreds of scientists, but we can see a very few true poets, not even perhaps more than a score all over the world. A man can be a scientist by self-culture, but he can never be a poet without inspiration.

The difference that exists between a scientist and a poet is exactly what exists between a

philosopher and a prophet. The philosopher discusses the path to "everlasting bliss," whereas the prophet tells it and points it out to mankind. Hundreds of philosophers are to be found, but only a few prophets are possible to be born. Philosophers are the results of vast study and deep meditation, but prophets are *inspired*. In them the SPIRIT of the great God appears and works for the benefit of mankind. They are the INCARNATIONS of the Godly SPIRIT.

This Universe is *perfect* in itself; from the minutest atom to the infinite starry space, there is nothing which can be termed defective. On one hand there are innumerable wants and on the other, there are supplies for each and every one of them.

There is a great intuitive mental thirst in every human mind; it is the thirst for attaining "everlasting bliss." Man pines for "happiness." From the just-born baby to the death-stricken old man, —all burn in this great thirst and struggle to get rid of it.

Is there no water created which can quench this thirst of mankind? Is universe imperfect here? Is there no escape from the miseries that beset human mind? He, who has made His universe perfect in all its glories, has not left this want without its supply. There are means, by

which man can quench his burning mental thirst,—his thirst for happiness, for eternal bliss, for salvation and final rest.

It is not a physical craving that it might be satisfied with some natural objects. It is a thirst which is in the mind;—the water therefore, that can quench it, is also in the mind. Human mind is a vast universe in itself; it contains infinite number of faculties. There are innumerable things in the mind, but who will tell us which of them is the *ambrosia* that makes man "happy"?

Philosophers after philosophers have meditated upon and thought over the matter; sages after sages have discussed and debated over the great problem; but they have all failed to find out the "means" of salvation and they wandered in chaos. It is beyond the finite power of a human being; it is beyond the range of limited human vision.

Will then mankind suffer from this burning thirst till the end of eternity? No,—the unknowable Nature's God has not left His works half-done. This has He done through his great Prophets. The SPIRIT of the GREAT ORIGIN appeared in a favoured few who pointed out the true path that leads man to "eternal bliss and final rest." This has not been done by one prophet or in the course of one year. It was done by many prophets born in



many parts of the world and through the space of many thousands of years. The reason is not far to seek. Mankind was divided into various races,—the status of their civilisation and education was different in diverse parts of the world; philosophers and sages preached their opinions and theories,—preistly bigotry and ignorant superstitions ran rampant through all societies. All these combined to undo the works of the *first Prophet*;—his "*words*" did not and could not reach all mankind; and where they reached, they were misunderstood and distorted. Therefore, subsequent prophets became the *necessities* of the world to explain the "*words*" of the first, where they were misunderstood or to preach them anew in places where they never reached.

## [ 2 ]

*Karma* (action), *Jnana* (light, or knowledge) and *Bhakti* (devotional love),—these are the three great truths that have been vouchsafed to mankind by All-merciful Providence through the lips and the lives of his great prophets. These three truths combined is the only path to "everlasting bliss." But this *one* commandment had to be repeated and explained to us more than once before we could

grasp its meaning. First we heard only,—“Act;” or we gave prominence to “Action,” leaving out “knowledge and love.” And even about “Action,” we formulated many theories, and never understood what was really meant by the word.

One thousand years later, a second Prophet appeared and explained “Action.” He said “duties known through perfect knowledge or light, namely *perfect pure acts* are meant by the “Actions.” But although his life was the impersonation of love, men gave prominence to “*holy living*” and left out the “Love” to shift for itself.

Two thousand years later another had to appear and to explain, “Love towards God, *vis.*, perfect love for Nature and for Nature’s God is *the light* (knowledge) that should and must enlighten the *acts of purity*. Holy-living, however perfect it might be, without love for Nature and Nature’s God, is not the path to heaven.”

Poor erring humanity! Thrice they heard the commandment,—“*Action, Light and Love*,—uttered in unmistakable voice, and thrice they failed to understand it. They created three distinct paths to heaven out of *one command*. Some took up only “Actions” (*karma landa*) and thought *Actions* meant sacrifice, worship, adoration, prayer &c. Some followed “Light” (*Gyan landa*) and

considered hard and fast moral purities, asceticism, rigid practices &c., are the only path to final rest; some again went mad after "Love" (*Bhakti marga*) and preached that singing, dancing, imagining and love-making with the Supreme Being are the only ship that can carry man to that celestial port. Philosophical dogmas and priestly superstitions added fuel to the fire; the true path was lost sight of; mankind roamed in chaos of religious doctrines and superstitious formalities.

Then again these three were not the only Prophets of the world. There were some who were born in various parts of the world to preach these three great "truths" or to explain them or parts of them, according to the necessity of the age and country in which they were born. Thus on account of the births of these various prophets in various parts of the world, various religions were formed. Philosophers and sages deliberated over and interpolated all these religions; additions and alterations were made by pedantic priests, and men of every calibre formulated doctrines and dogmas to their hearts' content.

A fourth Prophet was therefore the necessity of the age. He came not only to declare the "unity" of the three great "truths", namely Ac-

*tion, Light, and Love*, which people by their ignorance had made three distinct paths to salvation; he came not only to declare his grand UNITY,—but also to sound the unity and entity of all religions and all Prophets.

These four are the chief Prophets of the Hindus;—the first was a born Prophet and a perfect *incarnation* of the SPIRIT of God from his very birth. He was not only the first Prophet of the world in order of time,—he was *the* first Prophet in every sense, for all who followed him repeated or explained what he had said.

The three others were not born Prophets; they received “light” in grown up age. They came to explain the “words” of the First, and the SPIRIT of God appeared in them when they were found to be fit for receiving and retaining it in their frail bodies of flesh and blood.

Besides these four, there were a few more prophets born amongst the Hindus,—but many more than these are commonly and mistakenly considered as prophets. Those that were sages (*Rishis*) or saints (*Sidhyas* or *Mahatmas*) are often classed as prophets. Sages are men who have achieved “knowledge” or “light” by study and meditation, saints are those who have attained “God-head” and entered the “celestial blissful rest” by *self cul-*



## SRIKRISHNA.

[ 1 ]

**A**BOUT four thousand years ago,—a race of men attained a very high standard of civilisation and lived in the valley of the Ganges and the Yamuna. Philosophers and sages were born amongst them, who exercised their brains to find out the path of happiness, who meditated on the means of getting rid of the miseries of the world and who discussed and debated upon the various ways to solve the great problem of humanity, but who were not able to come to any definite conclusion. The means of getting everlasting bliss,—bliss for this life and the life after

death,—was discovered by their religion; various doctrines, dogmas, rites and sacrifices were instituted, and innumerable religious acts were invented for securing celestial bliss and eternal rest. But the great thirst of mankind was not satiated; men failed to get to the fountain-head, which gives forth the nectar of immortality and happiness.

At last the All-merciful Spirit of God descended from the heavenly height and pointed out through the lips and the life of a great man the path by which man can reach the temple of immortality and bliss. This great man was *Srikrishna*.

He was born in Muttra, which was one of the most important cities in the North Western Provinces. It was situated on the banks of the beautiful river *Yamuna* which rolled down by its side, giving beauty and health, plenty and prosperity all through the kingdom. A few miles up the river there was a splendid *Tamala* forest, where beautiful deer roamed in green pastures and rainbow-coloured peacocks danced under the shade of flowery trees. It was the pleasant haunt of the people of Muttra; it was the place for holding picnics for the young and the *Pujahs* and *Yagmas* for the old. It was the place where the beautiful *Yadu* maids came to dance and play; it was the place where Muttra matrons

came to while away their spare moments. In fact this beautiful *Briundabana*, situated as it was on the rippling *Yamuna*, gardened by *Tamala*, *Bakul*, and *Kadamba* trees, and interspersed with green pastures and shady streamlets, was the pleasure ground of the rich and the poor of the great city of *Muttra*.

On the opposite side of the river a few miles down the city there stood a very prosperous village, called *Gakula*. It was inhabited by milkmen, —a class of people always noted for their physical strength and wordly wealth. They possessed innumerable cows, bullocks and buffaloes, and lands covering many miles on the banks of the *Yamuna* were in their possession and were used as pasture-grounds for their cattle. The *Gakula* milkmen were simple, virtuous and honest; none of them was poor, but none was very rich. They had their own society, in which they lived independent and happy. Their women were beautiful and lovely, honest and simple, but bold and forward. Health, plenty and beauty reigned in *Gakula*; surely it was a place where gods might fancy to come and live.

At the time of which we are speaking *Nanda* was the head of this Dairy clan. None was so good and none was so fit to be the patriarch of this

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• wild but simple people as he; and he was truly matched, in all his good qualities by his wife *Yasoda*. They were loved and respected,—nay feared and obeyed, by all the people of *Gakula*. And his influence was so great that he commanded respect even from the members of the royal family, who ruled in *Muttra*. King *Kansa* was then the reigning sovereign,—a ruler hated of his subjects and feared by his enemies. He was a base and heartless tyrant; he was a monster of iniquity and demon of cruelty. The people groaned under his tyranny and oppression; but he was very powerful, and none there was in the kingdom who dared breathe a word against him.

## [ 2 ]

As in the case of every tyrant, king *Kansa* was always afraid and suspicious of all the people amongst whom he had to live and move. He always feared, lest he might be killed by his enemies. He took special care to know from every possible quarter whether he had any fear from any man, and if so, whom to fear; so that he might take previous precaution to ward them off. He was told by astrologers that his sister *Debaki's* eighth son would kill him. As soon as he learnt it, he

imprisoned his sister and her husband, *Vasudeva*, intending to kill them, so that no son might be born to them. But they fell at his feet and craved for mercy; they promised on solemn oath that they would deliver to him all the children born to them, and they would not complain, if he would kill them as soon as they were born. The cruel king was moved and he agreed to the proposal but kept them prisoners in his own palace, well guarded, so that they might not secretly remove their children.

One after another seven children were born and duly delivered to the cruel tyrant, who to make his safety doubly sure killed them all. But the poor parents determined to save the eighth; whatever be the consequence they determined to make an effort to save at least one of their beloved children from the wrath of their cruel relative and king. When at the dead of night their eighth child, which was a very beautiful boy, was born, *Vasudeva* wrapped it up in clothes, took it under his arms and stealthily came out of the prison-house. It was an awful night;—the blue sky was full of black clouds; the lightning was flashing and the thunder was roaring; the rain was falling like torrents, and the wind was blowing in mad fury. It was the eighth day of the full moon in the

month of *Bhadra*, the very middle of the rainy season. The *Yamuna* had risen, and she had almost flooded her banks. In this fearful night when Nature was dancing in her wild fury, *Vasudeva*, with his child under his arms, hastened towards the village of *Gakula*, and came to the bank of the rushing, roaring and foaming river. Somehow he managed to cross it; he ran towards the house of *Nanda*, whose wife *Yasoda* had given birth to a daughter that very night. None was astir,—none could possibly be astir in that dreadful night.

The chief of the milk-men was one of the greatest friends of *Vasudeva*. It is evident that the friends had talked over the ways and means of saving the eighth son of *Devaki*; every details had been arranged long before the birth of the child. In fact another wife of *Vasudeva*, named *Rohini*, was at *Gakula* with her son, called *Balarama*. Not only *Nanda*, but all his clan were the greatest friends of the *Jadu* chief. Thus with the help of these men a deliberate and well-laid plan was set to save *Krishna* from the cruel hands of the tyrant king, and it was successful.

*Gakula* was in deep sleep; none knew what was done at the dead of the night. The child that would kill the cruel king was thus saved. *Kansa*

found in the morning that a daughter was born to his sister. He brought it out and ordered it to be killed.

### [ 3 ]

THE son of *Vasudeva* and *Devaki* was tenderly nursed by *Yasoda* and carefully brought up by *Nanda*. The prince of the royal house of *Yadu* grew up as one of the milkman's boys of *Gakula*. He was the joy of all the village, and the milkmen and the milkmaids gave him various names, of which we shall mention only two. He was called *Kanai* by his mother and he was known by the name of *Krishna* all through his clan.

What possible education the son of a milkman could reasonably get? Learning was not in their line; their children had no idea of entering into the deep labyrinths of Science, Philosophy, or Literature. *Krishna* was sent out to take care of the cattle in the pasture, as soon as he grew up to the age of doing it; and he daily went out with all the other boys of the village. But although he learnt nothing, he learnt at least one thing; it was to play on the flute;—the flute that maddened the maids of *Gakula* and which in after life turning into a conch sent inspiration into the hearts of heroes on the bloody fields of battle.

Well, the beautiful *Yamuná* flowed by *Gakula* giving it health and plenty, but with the birth of *Krishna* a streamlet of Love flowed through the milkmen's village giving it untold pleasure and eternal bliss. The baby *Krishna* was the darling of his mother and the joy of all the villagers. The child *Krishna* was the caressing idol of all the women and the boy *Krishna* was the most beloved companion and play-mate of all the boys. The men and women of *Gakula* knew not why they began to love *Krishna* in a way the reason of which they could not account for. They loved their own children, but their love towards *Krishna* was something more than usual—nay, it was more than what could be found in Nature. And how naughty he was! He was not a good boy; neither was he gentle, nor mild. He would enter into his neighbours' houses, make havoc on the eatables,—specially on milk and butter,—break household utensils and do a thousand other mischiefs. So great was their love towards him, that they suffered in silence, never complaining for his misdeeds or any of his wicked pranks. But his pranks amongst his neighbours soon ceased. Though *Yasodá* was not at all willing,—yet *Krishna* was forced to go out into the field to look after his father's cattle. How unwillingly

and with how much reluctance she sent him out ! How many times she imploringly asked him not to go very far, not to go near the dangerous water of the *Yamundá*, not to go across the river,—for she was afraid of king *Kansa*,—not to roam under the hot sun and not to do a thousand other things ! She gave him eatables, those that she knew her darling *Krishna* was fond of. How many times she tenderly requested him to eat them when he would feel hungry ! She would stand at the gate and look at him,—as only a loving mother looks at her departing boy,—as he sped along with his play-mates, driving the cattle before him.

The boys grew mad after him ; they would not go to the pasture without their beloved *Kándi* ; no play could be played without him, no game was managed without his presence. He was their leader, he was their friend,—nay he was their all. He led them to many plays, he invented many games ; he enchanted them with his love and he amused them with his sweet flute. He showed at that early period of his life superhuman physical strength and sometimes mysterious power. He killed many gigantic birds and wild beasts, especially a demoniac snake, called *Kalia*, which used to live in the waters of the *Yamuna*.

THUS spread *Krishna* slowly and gradually around him a halo of love and created a new world of bliss. Thus when he entered into his teens, he drew all the maids of *Gakula* towards him, his beauty, his grace, his amiability and love, over and above all his sweet and enchanting music on his magic flute, made them unconsciously love him.

They met him on their way to the river,—in the morning when they went to bathe and in the evening when they went to fetch water in their pitchers. They began to converse with him, they began to loiter with him,—nay they sometimes passed some hours with him in merry-making. One after another they all fell in love with him, and *Krishna* loved them all. *Krishna* and the lovely maids of *Gakula* were slowly carried away into the blissful whirlpool of love. In the day *Krishna* was surrounded by his play-mates, and the maids had also their household duties to perform. They could only see him on their way to the *Yamunā* and pass a few minutes with him, which did not satisfy their cravings for his sweet company. They began to meet him at night, and especially at a moon-lit night, in the surrounding

gardens and orchards,—and sometimes on the green pasture. There they played and amused themselves with their lover in various ways. His flute was the signal for a general rush towards the beautiful groves, where was nothing but love and pleasure. *Krishna* organised plays, games and picnics in the gardens and groves for the amusement of the maids, as he did for the boys on the pasture grounds. Of these various games and merry-makings, only two we shall mention. In the rainy season he organised a grand swing-play, and in the spring a great red powder contest, in both of which all the boys and maids of *Gokula* heartily joined.

His plays and games, his sweet music, his universal love, drew round him hundreds of maids, not only of *Gokula*, not only of his own clan, but from far and wide. From the villages on both the banks of the river, nay from the *Muttra* city itself, boys and girls came flocking to him,—to love him, to adore him, to enjoy the heavenly bliss which he was freely distributing to all. There was not the least trace of carnality in this grand love,—a love in which not one but all the women, living on both the banks of the *Yamuna* participated. *Srikrishna* was a mere boy, only eleven years of age,—when all this happened in *Gokula*



Then at last he organised a grand moon-light ball, not in the orchards and gardens of *Gakula*, but in the magnificent parks of *Brindābana* itself, the place of recreation and amusement,—the pleasure gardens,—of the great city. The day fixed was the full moon of autumn, when the moon shines in all her glory;—the time the moon-light night,—the place the *Brindābana*, watered by the silvery *Yamuna*, and beautified by flowery plants and many-coloured foliage. In this ever charming place the grand *Rāsa* was held; all the lovely maidens of the neighbourhood in their best attire and bedecked with all the flowers and perfumes, came and joined in this grand dance. Great poets have failed adequately to describe this magnificent affair,—it is better for us not to attempt a thing, left undone by greater personages.

## [ 5 ]

KRISHNA'S kingdom of love did not consist of only boys and girls, children and women. All the milkmen of his own clan,—nay the people of all castes and creeds,—sacrificed themselves at the altar of his great love. In fact they made an unconditional surrender to him in all matters;—love rose above the ties of relation, above the rules

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of social etiquette, and above every other worldly consideration. The old and the young,—nay even the venerable patriarchs, bowed at his feet; they honoured and respected him as their leader and chief. It would suffice if we mention only one event; it will prove the extent of his influence over the people amongst whom he lived.

Once on a time he found that the elders of *Gakula* had been engaged in the preparation of a great *Yajma*. At the time of which we are speaking the Aryan people used to solemnise great sacrifices to propitiate their greatest God *Indra*, who was the God of rain. Rain was their greatest want for cultivation, and therefore they adored and worshipped their rain-god more than any other gods or goddesses. But *Srikrishna* preached thoroughly a new religion,—a religion novel and subversive of all their cherished beliefs and faiths. He preached against the time-honoured ancient religion and advocated Nature-worship.

"What preparations are these?" said he to his father, "Why are you all so busy? Whom are you going to worship?" "My dear son," replied *Nanda*, "we are going to solemnise a sacrifice in honour of *Indra*, the god of rain, according to the time-honoured custom of the country. He gives us rain; rain makes the land fertile, and from the

fertility of the land people live in comfort and ease."

We find *Srikrishna* preaching before the elders of *Gakula* a new religion; he was then almost a boy,—he had no education, no religious training, no learning,—he was but a milk man's boy, but he preached,—he uttered words to which his elders submitted and by which time-honoured religion was washed away.

He said, "Man is the result of his own *actions*. If he is born, if he is happy, if he is miserable, if he is good or if he is bad, all is the result of his own *actions*. If he *does not act*,—God cannot reward or punish him. Therefore if any one should be considered *supreme* it should be the *Action*. Why then should we worship *Indra*? What can he do? The universe follows Nature—Nature is the *action* of an unknowable ONE. Therefore *Action* is God. We live by *action*; if we want to live, we must *act*. Therefore that which keeps us alive should be adored and worshipped. These cows are the main-stay of our support,—this pasture ground and that hill are the main-stay of our cows, therefore let us adore and worship them. Let us solemnise sacrifices in honour of them. Why should we worship *Indra*?"

So great was their love and respect for him,

that they submitted to him,—though a mere boy,—for the future welfare of their souls;—they trampled down their own religion and followed him to do things, novel and new. They accompanied him to the hill *Gobardhana*, there to worship Nature.

We need not say that such doings could not remain hidden. The name of *Krishna* passed from house to house; his great deeds became the general topics of conversation and his fame spread all over the kingdom of *Mattra*. King *Kansa* was alarmed; though he attempted to kill *Krishna* more than once, and sent emissaries for the purpose, yet he did not take him to be a very dangerous personage. But he now grew really alarmed; and his alarm was hundred-fold increased when he heard that *Krishna* was not the son of *Nanda*, but that of *Vasudeva*,—the very boy to kill whom he had killed innumerable children. His anger knew no bounds; but he controlled himself, for he knew that *Krishna* had become an idol of worship to all the people of *Mattra*. An open attempt to kill him now meant a general revolt of all his subjects. He also feared that his soldiers would not fight with *Krishna*, but would go over to his side. So he determined to kill him treacherously; any how he thought of removing his great enemy.

the assembled people also understood the king's evil intention.

*Krishna* easily killed the murderous pugilists and then he attacked the wicked king and killed him on the spot. There were great uproars and confusions; and amidst the general acclamation he was placed on the throne of *Muttra* with the unanimous consent of the people.

But he was not ambitious; he never aspired to a throne. He brought out the old king *Ugra-Sena* from the prison, where he was thrown by his wicked son *Kansa*. "Sire," said he, "I do not want the kingdom and the kingdom does not want me. I have not killed your son for his throne. He grew very vicious and wicked and became the scourge of his country. To save the people from his persecutions, I have killed him. I do not want to be a king. Nothing would be more pleasant to me than to live in the forest of *Gakula*. Listen to my prayers,—you are the most respected Patriarch of the *Yadu* Dynasty, assume the sceptre and rule the people."

Then he turned towards the weeping relatives and widowed queens of the late king,—he tried to console them, he fell at their feet and asked for their pardon,—he ordered a royal funeral for the dead king, he did all that could

give them consolation for their great bereavement.

The dead body of *Kansa* was duly cremated and *Ugrasena* was placed on the vacant throne. *Krishna* superintended both the ceremonies and then prepared himself to go to *Rishi Shandipani* to learn what he had to teach.

[ 6 ]

He has forgotten all his early boyish pranks, he has turned a grave statesman; he has become a powerful and able ruler. He has forgotten his loving playmates, his lovely maidens, his obedient adorers;—nay, even his mother *Yasoda* and father *Nanda*. When they all came to his royal palace to take him back to his old haunts, he told them as prince *Harry* told his boon companions.

"Presume not that I am the thing I was,  
I have turned away my former-self."

The days of love-making were gone; the days of playing, and merry-makings were over; *Krishna* had much to do in the field of politics. The whole of India had been torn by internal dissensions; tyrants had become all powerful and merciful rulers had disappeared. The people had fled into the deepest forest to save themselves from the

oppressions of wicked men. When *Krishna* found himself the pillar and the support of the throne of *Muttra*, he saw all this in a glance; he thought he could do much to protect the oppressed and bestow peace and happiness all over India. He had virtually become a ruler of a province,—why, he could be the ruler of all India! He could bring under his standard all the contending factions; he could chastise the tyrants and help the good. Indeed he found he had enough works to do, if he wanted to extend and spread a kingdom of love and happiness all over the country. The vast continent of India was not a *Gakula*; to do in this vast empire what he did in his own country village, required unknowable state-craft, and unsurpassing intelligence; in short he required a great head and a broad heart.

And both he possessed. His change of character was so sudden that all the people were taken aback. When his play-mates came to his royal court, he told them gravely that his life at *Gakula* had ended, that he was no longer their loving play-mate and leader, but their king and sovereign. He asked them to go back and try to amuse the *Gakula* maidens by doing what he used to do. When weeping the broken-hearted maidens came to his door, he most seriously told

them to return; he requested them to forget him and to try to be happy without him. When his bereaved mother *Yasodā* with *Nanda* and his clan appeared at his court, he asked them to consider him no longer their son, but as a prince of the great *Yadu* dynasty and as their present sovereign and chief.

There were lamentations all over *Gakula*, but there was joy all over the kingdom of *Muttra*. Both the lamentation and the joy arose out of the great love that the people bore for him. The people of *Gakula* could not bear his absence; would they be able to live without seeing him often! The people of *Muttra* rejoiced, because their beloved *Krishna* had at last become their ruler and king. The cruel and hard-hearted tyrant *Kansa* was killed and the great and the good *Krishna* had become their sovereign;—what could be more welcome than this in this wide world!

At the cottage of *Rishi Shandipani*, *Krishna* and his brother, *Balaram* learnt philosophy and theology, politics and science. *Krishna* was matchless in physical strength,—now at the *Rishi's* place he learnt the arts of archery and the military science. He not only became intellectually great, but he became unequalled in arms. Within a few



years he finished his education and returned to *Muttra*.

In his absence *Muttra* had been overrun by a very powerful king, named *Jarasanda*, whose two sisters were the queens of *Kansa*. The widowed queens returned to their brother and complained against the *Yadus*, especially against *Krishna*. Terrible *Jarasanda* came with a vast army, but *Krishna* soon hastened home to drive him out of the *Yadu* kingdom. Seventeen times *Jarasanda* invaded *Muttra* and seventeen times he was driven back; on the eighteenth time he joined with a very powerful king, named *Kalajabgu*,—a non-aryan sovereign,—who had gathered round his standard all the non-aryan hilly people of the north. *Krishna* had not sufficient forces under him to oppose the vast hordes of mountaineers; he thought prudence was the best part of valour. As soon as he learnt that *Kalajaban* and his hordes had begun marching towards *Muttra*, he at once built a new city on the coast of the ocean,—a place quite impregnable and capable of being defended by a very small army. He named the city as *Dwarika* and removed all the women and children to the new city. By a stratagem he killed *Kalajabgu* and then routed his army,—but he was soon attacked by *Jarasandha*. He was

obliged to take flight, but he was hotly pursued by the terrible king. Somehow he escaped with his life and reached *Duarka* in safety.

# [ 7 ]

A few years after we find his figure towering above the heads of all. We need not mention how he managed to raise himself up to this lofty height. We find him at this period a man, whose friendship was to be desired, whose favours were to be prayed for, whose smiles were to be looked after and whose frowns were to be feared. Great potentates and powerful chiefs vied with one another to do him honour. Unquestionably he had become the first man of India. Why should we speak of other chiefs and potentates? Even the great *Kurus* and *Pándus*, who were the most powerful, nay, the *de facto* Imperial Dynasty of India, had fully submitted to his leadership. They considered themselves honoured to get his friendship and favour. *Bhishma*, the Patriarch of this great dynasty, the recognized first warrior and statesman of the period, had acknowledged him to be an incarnation of God and adored and worshipped him as such. From the hoary *Himálayas* to the island city; from *Duarka* to *Kamakshya* he had

become the Ruler of all rulers. He held in his hand both the keys of Indian politics and religion. His great intelligence was admired and submitted to; his great love was adored and worshipped.

He had married more than one royal princess. He had married *Rukshmini*, then *Shatya-bhāma* and others,—all born of royal parents. He had increased his army and raised up a great and most powerful contingent out of the strong and brave milkmen of *Gakula*. He had made his subjects happy, without which no ruler could be invincible and secure.

The internal dissensions, that were rending the country from one corner to the other, had been all settled up by him; the tyrants had been chastised and forced to be merciful; peace and prosperity had appeared where there were blood-shed and misery. And all this he did,—not by any physical force,—not by issuing forth with arms and ammunitions, with infantry and cavalry, with horses and elephants, but by simple statesmanship. Hardly ever he himself fought a battle, he managed all this through his great intelligence and magnificent state-craft.

The people of India had become very wicked and vicious; they had been spoiled without any hope of redemption or reformation. The virtuous

and the good had retired into the jungle or had been living in misery and woe. *Krishna* resolved to exterminate these men from the face of the earth and thus to save India from future miseries and oppressions.

Once *Srikrishna* said to his wife *Rukshmini*, "Princess, you have not done well to marry me after rejecting the offers of great potentates and kings. I have no kingdom,—I live out of fear in a city on the shore of the sea. My character and conduct is peculiar and not according to the general usage. No body understands me. The wives of men like myself always meet with miseries. I love to associate with the poor and fallen, and therefore the rich do not like to meet men like me. I have no attachment for the *body* or for the *home*,—I have no attachment for wife, children, wealth or luxury. Men like me live contented with their own selves. Therefore, Oh Princess of *Bidharva*, you have done wrong to marry me."

This little speech will tell us why *Krishna* rose above all other men of his age.

### [ 8 ]

IN the range of history or fiction we have never come across such a grand and great character. He

was a lover, a thorough worldly man, a great politician and statesman, a philosopher and a prophet. Being a milkman's boy he rose to be the greatest man of India,—he became the Ruler of all rulers, the Prophet of all prophets and the Philosopher of all philosophers. But if he became all this for self-aggrandisement, if these were the results of his supernatural ambition,—then of course he would have commanded very little respect from good and sensible men.

But, no,—self was not in him; there was not the least selfishness in his actions. As we have said, his sole aim was to create a new world of love, peace, happiness and bliss. To accomplish this he had to do many things and had to assume many characters.

When *Srikrishna* flourished in India, the whole country was divided into various kingdoms, of which the followings were the most powerful, namely *Kuru* kingdom, *Panchal* kingdom and *Magadha* kingdom. Blind *Dhrisharastra* was the king of the *Kurus*, but his uncle *Bhisma*, who vowed celibacy, was the patriarch of the clan; *Drupada* was the king of the *Panchals* and *Jarasandha* was that of *Magadha*.

King *Dhrisharastra* had many sons and he had five nephews; but his sons were very vicious and

they conspired to kill their cousins, who were not only good, but powerful in arms. The five brothers escaped in disguise and roamed over the country to secure the help of some powerful king to recover their rightful possessions from the wicked sons of *Dhritarastra*.

In their travel they came to the *Panchal* kingdom and there heard they that the king would give away his daughter to the hero, who would be able to hit the eye of a golden fish placed mechanically on a high pole. All the kings and potentates had been invited to come and they had all assembled to try their skill of archery. The five brothers went to the assembly in the guise of Brahmins. When all failed to hit the fish, the third brother, *Arjuna* rose and was successful. There was a great uproar; the disappointed chiefs rose to attack the successful victor, but *Srikrishna* was present. He was honoured and respected by all. As soon as he told them that the Brahmin had justly and fairly won the princess, they laid down their arms and went away to their respective homes. This little incident clearly indicates that *Srikrishna* had secured immense influence over all the ruling heads of India.

But *Srikrishna* was always on the side of the good and the weak. He was the only man who

saw through the disguise of the *Pandu* Princes who were known as dead all over India. He followed the disguised Brahmins to their place of lodging and congratulated them on their good fortune. From that day *Srikrishna* became not only the friend, but the adviser and guide of the *Pandu* Princes. It was he who introduced them to king *Drupada* of *Panchal*, it was he who called a council of chiefs and advised king *Drupada* to send an ambassador to *Dhritarastra*, asking him to grant his nephews their just rights. He lived with them till the ambassador returned with a message of welcome from the *Kuru* king to the banished princes, who were asked to come back and settle themselves at a place called *Indraprasta*. *Srikrishna* went with them, helped them in clearing a great jungle and founding a new kingdom. When he saw the *Pandus* comfortably settled, he returned to his own city of *Dwarka*.

The *Pandubrothers*, all five, married the Princess of *Panchal* to obey their mother's command and it was arranged,—to avoid future disagreement,—that when one of the brothers would be with her, no other brother would go to her or to the room where they would be. If any of them would violate this rule, he would be bound to fly as an exile for certain years

One day a poor Brahmin came to *Arjuna* and piteously appealed to him to rescue his property from robbers. Unfortunately *Arjuna's* arms were in the room where *Yudhisthira* was with *Draupadi*. To save the poor man's property he faced the dreadful penalty of banishment. He went into the room, took up his arms, and hastened to help the poor man.

After chastising the robbers he returned to his brothers and asked them to banish him. With very sorrowful heart the brothers bade him farewell and *Arjuna* left *Indraprastha* and went out on pilgrimage.

He travelled all over the country and at last came to *Pravasha*. His dearest friend *Krishna*, the prince of *Mathura* and *Dwaraka*, went to meet him. He brought him to his capital and gave his sister *Subhadra* in marriage with him. Here he passed many a happy day with his friend and wife.

We need not say that he met with many adventures in his travels. It is superfluous to mention that he showed many wonderful feats of arms in helping the needy and punishing the wicked. After the completion of the specified time for banishment, he came back to *Indraprastha* and joined his brothers. They all lived very happily.



and they tried their best to please the *Kurus* by every possible means.

*Duryodhana*, the eldest of the *Kuru* princes, married Princess *Bhanumati* and several children were born to her. Their daughter *Lakshmana* fell in love with the son of *Krishna*. The young couple were married in great pomp, both branches of the great Lunar House taking prominent parts in celebrating the nuptials.

## [ 9 ]

*Bhima*, *Aryuna*, *Nakula* and *Sahadeva* went out according to the custom of the age to conquer the adjacent kingdoms. They subjugated many kings and exacted tributes from various principalities. They returned home with immense wealth and Raja *Yudhisthira* intended to celebrate the victory by holding the *Rajsuya Yagma*.

But the *Pandu* Prince could do nothing without the advice of *Srikrishna*. He sent an ambassador to *Dwarka* to bring the great *Judu* to *Indraprasta*. A few days before the arrival of the ambassador from the *Pandus*, *Srikrishna* received a messenger from the princes who were kept prisoners and whose kingdoms were annexed by the powerful but wicked king *Jaraszda* of *Magadha*. They

piteously appealed to him to relieve them from their prison-life and save them from the foul murder which the terrible king had contemplated.

*Krishna* went to *Indraprasta* and advised *Judhisthira* to hold the *Rajshuya*. "Oh king," said he, "undoubtedly you are the Paramount Lord of all the other kings both in arms and in goodness; but most of the kings are rotting in *Jarasandha's* prison. So long he is alive, he will oppose your *Jagma*, therefore my advice is to kill him first before you celebrate the *Rajshuya*." The brothers expressed their willingness to march at once with their army and fight with the *Magadha* king. "Why should you," said *Krishna*, "cause unnecessary blood-shed? What fault his soldiers have done that you should kill them. He alone should suffer for his wickedness. Let *Arjuna* and *Bhima* accompany me,—we three shall go and challenge him to single combat. I am sure, amongst three of us he, whom he will select for his antagonist, will be able to cut short his evil career." The advice was taken and the three princes started for the kingdom of *Magadha*.

They went in the garb of Bramhins; they were received in all honour, but *Krishna* thus addressed the king. "Do not consider us Bramhins,—we are Kshatryas. This is *Bhima*, this is *Arjuna* and I am

*Krishna*. We have come to challenge you to a single combat. Make your choice amongst us; any of us is prepared to fight with you." "Is this your purpose?" replied the king, "I am a Kshatrya and I am not afraid to accept your challenge. I shall satisfy your desire for fight. But you are now my guests,—accept my hospitality and rest awhile." "Oh king," said *Krishna*, "so long you do not fight with us, we cannot accept your hospitality." "In that case," replied the king, "prepare for death. You *Krishna*, you are not to be classed as a soldier. Words—not deeds—are your *forte*. The world will cry shame if *Jarasandha* fights with you. As for *Aryuna*, he is a mere boy,—he is no match for me. This *Bhima* seems to have some strength in him to fight for some moments with me. Ask him to be ready for death."

They fought before all the city; like two mad elephants they fought till *Jarasandha* was killed. *Krishna* brought out the captive Rajas from their prison and invited them to the *Rajshuya Yajna* of *Raja Yudhisthira*. Then he placed the son of *Jarasandha* on the throne of *Magadha* and returned to *Indraprasta*.

The great *Yajna* was held. All the chiefs and potentates came to pay homage to the *Pandu* Princes. There were great festivities,—the pomp and

ple; a man who has committed all sorts of vice and crime. Have you invited us to be insulted thus! Is this the way you treat your honoured guests?" Then turning towards *Krishna* he said, "What a foolish and insolent man you must be that you do not raise objection when they want to ridicule you thus! You know what you are worth." He then turned towards the assembled Rajahs and said, "Well, Rajas, where such a miserable wretch is so highly honoured, *Shishupal* considers it beneath his dignity to be present." Thus saying the enraged king rose to leave the assembly and many followed his example.

Then there arose a great uproar. The youngest of the *Pandu* Prince rose from his seat and cried out, "I place my foot upon his head, who refuses to adore *Krishna*." *Shishupal* foamed and roared in anger, he began to shower vilest abuses over *Krishna's* head, but he stood silent and smiled at his childish vituperation.

There were words and cross words between the old Patriarch *Blushma* and the young turbulent king *Shishupal*. At last *Blushma* stood up and said "We shall adore and worship *Krishna*, and I say, I also place my foot upon his head, who says "no" to it. If there is any one who considers himself a greater

man than *Krishna*, why does he not challenge him to a combat?"

*Shishupal* turned towards *Srikrishna*, who had not uttered a word all the while; he challenged him in the foulest language and asked him to fight with him, if he was not a coward. All eyes were turned on *Krishna*. He silently rose from his seat and said, "I have more than once pardoned you, for I thought you would turn a new leaf in your life. But I find I was mistaken. When you have challenged me, I, as a *Kshatrya*, cannot refuse to grant your prayer. Prepare for death." Thus saying *Srikrishna* attacked the wicked king and soon beheaded him. All the other unruly chiefs were over-awed and they dared not disturb the peace of the great *Jagma*. It was solemnised in great pomp and grandeur. All the invited guests went away to their homes much pleased, except the *Kuru* princes, who burnt in envy for the success and glory of their *Pandu* cousins. They conspired for their fall and they were successful.

They held a secret council, in which their uncle *Sakuni* advised them to invite *Yudhishtira* to play. "A *Kshatrya*," said he, "Can never refuse to accept a challenge when asked to fight or to gamble. I shall play dice with him and win all his

property and wealth. Let us disgrace him and his brother before the whole world."

The wicked advice was accepted; *Yudhishtira* was invited to play; and the most unfortunate game was begun. It was a great gambling match,—the *Pandus* were on one side and the *Kurus* on the other.

Fortune was against the *Pandu* Prince; he began to lose. He gradually lost all his wealth,—he lost all his possessions, his palaces, horses and elephants. He was up in the play;—finding that he had nothing else to bet, he betted his younger brother and lost. He then one after another lost all his brothers. He then betted himself and lost too. There was nothing more to lose; he raised up his head, looked round the great assembly and wiped away the hot drops that had gathered over his forehead. "*Yudhishtira*," sneered *Sakuni*, "Bet this time *Draupadi*, your wife. You are sure to win, for she is a lucky woman." He silently began to play and betted his dear wife, but alas, fortune was against him; he lost again!

There was great glee on the side of the *Kurus*; they again and again cheered for their victory.

At this point good *Vidura* interfered. he went first to *Bhishma* and then to king *Dhritarashtra*. He told the blind monarch what his wicked sons

had done. He entreated him to save the *Kurus* from the wrath of the *Pandus* and to protect the great Lunar Dynasty from the self-dissension and self-destruction. The king brought the *Pandus* to him and freed them from their eternal slavery. They were allowed to go and to begin life anew.

*Duryodhana* was much disappointed. He could not disobey his father's command and could not prevent the *Pandus* to go away. But he knew that it would be very easy for them to conquer fresh kingdoms and to secure wealth untold. He called his uncle *Sakuni* to advise him what to do and how to destroy these thorns in his path to glory.

"Invite them again," said *Sakuni*, "to play and ask them to bet in this wise. If they lose, they will have to go to the jungle for twelve years, the last of which, they shall have to pass *incognito*. If they are found out, they will have to go again for twelve years and so on. We are sure to find them out and rest assured they will never be able to come back." "Dear uncle," replied *Duryodhana*, "suppose *Yudhishtira* declines to play or to go to the jungle at all?" *Sakuni* smiled and said, "My dear nephew, you do not know him."

Next morning *Yudhishtira* was again challenged to play. His brothers entreatingly asked him not

to accept the challenge, but *Yudhishtira* replied, "Dear brothers, do you advise me to neglect the holy duties of a *Kshatrya*? God has destined us for misery; let us calmly submit to His will."

The unfortunate play was again begun, and *Yudhishtira* lost the game. They sacrificed themselves for virtue and truth and silently left *Hastinapura* to pass twelve years in banishment. Their faithful and dear wife *Draupadi* followed them to be the partner of her husband's miseries, and amidst the wails of the people they entered into deep forest.

*Krishna* knew nothing of all these sad events. His city *Dwarka* was invaded by a neighbouring king and he was obliged to carry on a long war to punish and drive him away. When he returned to his capital after chastising the wicked chief, he was informed of the sad fate that had overtaken his *Pandu* friends. He hastened to meet them in the forest, where they were living. He expressed his heart-felt sorrow for their misfortune; he passed some days in their hut and returned to his city, promising to meet them again as soon as possible.

The *Pandu* princes passed the last year of their exile in the kingdom of *Birat*,—but the king at last found out the disguise of *Yudhishtira* and his brothers.

He placed him on his throne and gave the



*Pandus* all possible honour. His daughter *Utiara* was married to *Abhimanyu*, the son of *Arjuna*, his mother being *Subhadra*.

[ 10 ]

THE news very soon reached the capital of the *Kurus*. The blind king *Dhr̥itarāshtra*, the Nestor of the Lunar House, *Bhishma*, the great preceptor, *Drona*, the good and honest *Vidura*, all tried to induce *Duryodhana* to make an amicable settlement with the *Pandus*, but at the advice of his evil-making uncle *Shakuni* and his ambitious friend *Karna* he put a deaf ear to all their good advices.

Every effort was made by the *Pandus* to avoid blood-shed; *Srikrishna* was all along for peace; he was deadly against all unnecessary blood-shed and carnage. At last he himself determined to go to *Duryodhan* and to induce him to be generous towards his cousins.

All the country through which *Krishna* passed was decorated and illuminated in his honour; old and young, men and women, ran to see him, fell at his feet and kissed his garments. As soon as old *Dritarashtra* heard that *Krishna* was coming to his capital, he made grand preparations for his recep-

tion. The city was decorated with flowers and foliage; muscians were placed at intervals to discourse sweet music; royal princes were sent out to escort him to the palace. *Srikrishna* was worshipped both by his enemies and friends. As for the common people, they knew him to be a living God. Never in the pages of history we find a man so much honoured, worshipped and adored as he was. But he was not successful in his mission.

"*Duryodhana*," entreated he, "Give the five brothers only five villages of your vast domain. They would be satisfied with the smallest, that you will offer them." "No, not an inch of land," replied he, "without a mortal struggle."

So battle was determined upon on both sides. Both the contending parties sent out invitations to the allied kings and princes. Great preparations were made for the coming struggle, and soldiers were collected from every part of the Empire.

*Krishna* was the greatest man of the age. Both the contending parties were eager to secure him, but to him both parties were equally dear and near. When appealed to, he said that he could not take arms against any of them, but he would be present in the battle with him who would come to him first. *Duryodhana* hastened to *Dwarka* and went to meet him, but he found him asleep

There was a golden throne near the head of *Krishna*; he sat on it and patiently waited till he would rise. A few minutes after *Arjuna* came and sat at his feet. *Krishna*, opening his eyes, saw *Arjuna* and asked him what he could do for him. "I have come," said he, "Oh friend, to pray for a gift." "What can I give you, my friend?" replied *Krishna*. "You know that I am always at your service." "Give me," said *Arjuna*, "Your good self. I want nothing else." *Krishna* smiled and replied. "My dear friend, you must have heard that I have resolved not to take arms in this battle. What help it would be to you to get me?" "Dear friend," said *Arjuna*, "I know I shall win the battle, but I shall not be happy if my dearest friend be not a partner of my glory and happiness." "Very well," said he, "I shall be your charioteer."

He turned his head and saw *Duryodhana*. "Dear brother," said he, "You have heard what I had told *Arjuna*. However, I am bound to serve you. Would you like to have me or my invincible army?" *Duryodhana* thought it would be useless to take *Krishna* who would not fight. As for his counsel, he would get better from his dear uncle *Sakuni*. It was surely something to get *Krishna's* great army. He said, "I shall thank you, Oh brother, if you will kindly give me your army."

*Krishna* agreed and *Duryodhana* returned to *Hastināpura* with the invincible *Jadu* army. Then *Arjuna* left *Dvāraka* and *Krishna* accompanied him.

When all preparations were complete, *Yudhishthira* marched out with his army and encamped on the field of *Kuruskhetra*. *Duryodhana* with his stupendous army came out of *Hastināpura* to give him battle.

## [ 11 ]

THERE were millions of soldiers on both sides, the greatest generals and the most powerful potentates had come to meet in mortal struggle. It was a battle between brothers and brothers and friends and friends. On one side there were the greatest of the great *Bhishma*, the ablest of the able *Drona*, the bravest of the brave *Karna*. There were one hundred sons and numerous grandsons of the blind king, backed by the most powerful chiefs of India. On the other there were the five *Pāndu* princes with their sons *Abhimanyu* and *Ghatotkacha*. There were king *Drupada* and king *Birāta* and some other kings and princes, connected with them either by blood or by marriage. And to crown all there was *Krishna*, who was their guide, friend and leader.

happy I am ! Kill me, *Krishna* ! What greater prayer I can make to you than that of asking you to take my life."

But by this time *Arjuna* had come ; he clasped his arms round his body to prevent him from proceeding further. He promised that he would kill *Bhishma* ; *Krishna* smiled and returned to the chariot.

But it was not an easy task to kill the greatest hero of the age.

The *Pandus* held a council of war. " Friends," said *Krishna*, " None in the world can defeat *Bhishma*, so long he is in arms. Accept my advice. Do your duty ;—your duty is to win the battle and therefore do not mind the means. *Arjuna*, do thou take, *Shikhandi* with you to-morrow. *Bhishma* will surely leave off arms if he sees him. That is the opportunity,—defeat him, overpower him, kill him, if necessary and save the *Pandu* army "

Next day *Krishna's* advice was adopted. *Bhishma* saw *Shikhandi* on *Arjuna's* chariot. He smiled and left arms. *Arjuna* immediately wounded him mortally and great *Bhishma* fell from his chariot. The leaders of both the parties hastened to the wounded Patriarch. Both the *Kuru* and the *Pandu* princes wept bitterly for him, for surely he was more than a father to them all

*Aswathama* could be killed. "Oh *Krishna*," said he "I cannot believe that my most beloved son is dead. Let *Yudhishtira* say that my son is no more and I shall believe it, for I know he cannot tell a lie."

*Krishna* managed to bring *Yudhishtira* to the great warrior; he asked him to say that *Aswathama* was dead, but *Yudhishtira* positively refused to tell such a falsehood. But *Krishna* finally induced him to say, "*Aswathama* is dead, the elephant." When *Yudhishtira* said, "The elephant," *Krishna* blew his great conch and the words did not reach *Drona's* ears. When he was told that his son was dead, he fainted and immediately one of the warriors on the *Pandu* side jumped upon his chariot and cut off his head.

The next day, *Kurus* came out under the command of *Karna*. There was hand to hand fight from morning to evening. Blood flowed like water and reddened the field of *Kurushkhetra*. *Bhima* killed his cousin *Duswashana* and the rest of the wicked *Kuru* Princes but he had to retreat having been defeated by *Karna*. Many fell on both sides, and the *Pandu* army was gradually driven back and finally routed. *Arjuna* soon came to rally round his army, and stood face to face with *Karna*. Both were equally great in arms; they fought like lions for hours together till *Karna* fell. The *Pandu*

cheered lustily and the *Kurus* retired to their camp.

It was soon rumoured that Raja *Duryodhana* had fled from the field. The *Pandu* immediately pursued and found him hidden in a place of safety. When he saw that there was no escape, he came out and challenged *Bhima* to a single combat. They fought like two mad elephants, but king *Duryodhana* at last fell mortally wounded. Every part of king *Duryodhana's* body except the thigh was as hard as iron. No weapon could have any effect on any part of his body. *Bhima* in the heat of fight forgot that he was to hit *Duryodhana* on thigh; but *Krishna* was there. As if encouraging *Bhima*, he repeatedly clapped his hands on his own thigh. The hint was soon understood, and king *Duryodhana* was mortally wounded.

The *Pandus* came to *Hastinapura* after the victory. But it was a victory saturated with the blood of all that was dear and near to them. There was no joy; there was no merriment. Their entrance to the capital of their forefathers was not ushered in by the sounds of drums or the boomings of fire-works. Slowly and silently they entered the palace, but there were heart-rending lamentations all around.

the earth all the vicious and the wicked. It was clearly apparent from every work of his life that his sole aim was to create a new world,—a world of love, happiness and bliss. But he himself appeared to be a man without a heart and without any feelings;—a man who was an incarnation of *worldliness*;—a man who, to serve his purpose, could do any and every sort of things. He was a contradiction of moral faculties,—nay, he was a great *mystery*.

¶ If he had disappeared from the world without explaining his religion and morals, he would have been taken for one of the worst men ever born. But in the field of the great battle of *Kurukshetra*, when his friend *Arjuna* absolutely declined to follow his peculiar morals, he was forced to explain and support his novel doctrines with arguments. And they were so convincing, they were so true and grand, that thenceforth he was universally adored and worshipped as the great Incarnation of the Supreme Being. His religion became the religion of humanity.

If he spared his relatives,—his own children and grand children, we would have questioned his honesty of purpose. But, no,—he did spare none,—not even himself. He exterminated the *Kurus*, his very near relatives and friends; he then



began to kill his own sons and grandsons. The whole clan was soon exterminated; there was none left alive except *Krishna*. When there was none to kill, *Krishna* coolly took a view of the bloody field and moved away.

Then he asked his charioteer to go to *Hastinapura* and to inform his friend *Arjuna* what had happened. "Tell him," said he, "that all the *Yadus* are dead. Ask him in my name to hasten to *Dwaraka*, where the widowed *Yadu* princesses are left unprotected. Tell him to take them to *Hastinapura* and give them protection."

It was evident that he had no mind to return to his capital. Perhaps he thought his occupation was gone; perhaps he thought his work was done. He slowly moved away and left the place where all that was dear and near to him fell.

He came to a tree, sat under it and fell asleep; —soon there appeared a hunter, who saw his reclining figure from a distance through the thick leaves of the tree. He mistook him for a game, took aim and shot.

There in the deep forest under the green leaves of the tree the greatest man of the age was mortally wounded; there he breathed his last unknown and uncared for. The man, whose smile was sun-shine to all the good and whose frowns were the death-

Song of God.

He lived the life of a true Hindu; he followed others in all existing religious matters; he scrupulously performed all the religious acts then in vogue amongst the people, he had the highest respect for the Brahman Sages. He never tried to demolish the old religion and to put a new one of his own in its place. He said, "It is better to perform one's own religion, though devoid of excellence, than to adopt a new one."

When he flourished, there were three philosophical schools much honoured in India. The *Sankya* explained the origin and development of the universe and taught that "*true knowledge*" emancipates man from misery and from the bonds of transitory existence. The *Yoga* said, "*true knowledge*" means "knowledge of God" and that this



## HIS TEACHINGS.

[ 1 ]

WE have been able to narrate only a few of the chief events of *Srikrishna's* life ; we have hardly space enough to write much about his teachings. He was the only Prophet who did not take the *role* of a religious preacher. He lived the life of a worldly man ; he acted as any other man of his age, but he showed in his life the perfection of *Action, Light and Love*. His whole life and career was a living preaching—a burning sermon,—a glowing manifestation of the all-merciful and all-good God. He showed in his life what a Perfect Man and a Happy Man is. He pointed

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"knowledge" can only be acquired by contemplation and exercises. The *Vedānta* said that man's self emanates from the great universal SELF and therefore man *must* know, *that* from which it came. *Srikrishna* never disputed the doctrines of any of these schools; he supported all the three and supplied the *missing link* in the chain of these philosophies. He did not create a new philosophy; he did not preach a new theology.

All existed,—but existed in darkness. In a dark room there might be many beauties, but these beauties remain unseen by the people on account of the want of a light. Such was exactly the case with mankind. There was every thing in the world to make man happy, but all was in darkness; man could not see the *means* of their happiness though near at hand. *Srikrishna* appeared with a light,—he created nothing, but he showed man what man could not see.

The Hindus knew through their great philosophers that, "true knowledge" is the means of salvation. But what is a "true knowledge"? What are the means to acquire this "true knowledge?" The Brahmins said,—*Jagmas* and *Yogas* were the means of acquiring true knowledge. The *Shankya* philosophers said,—to know the origin of human miseries and to get rid of them is true

knowledge. The *Yoga* philosophers said,—to know God by *Yoga* practices was the true knowledge; the *Vedantists* said,—to know that I and God are the same is the true knowledge. Some *Actions*, whatever they might be, were required to acquire this "true knowledg." But there were differences of opinions about these *actions*. There was darkness around this fundamental truth. *Srikrishna* appeared to drive away this darkness, to point out what *actions* were to be performed and to enlighten the path through which mankind might walk on to the kingdom of God.

We find all his teachings collected in the *Bhagavat Gita*. What is this *Gita* ?

## [ 2 ]

*Gita* is an episode of the great Sanskrit Poem *Mahabhrata*. It contains the instructions that were given by *Srikrishna* to *Arjuna* on the field of *Kurukshetra*, when the latter absolutely declined to fight with his relatives and friends. We need not discuss the point, (it has been done by greater men) whether *Gita* is really a part of the great Epic or an after-addition, whether the instructions contained in it were really given by *Srikrishna* or they were from the imagination of the author and

whether *Srikrishna* had at all anything to do with this part of the Poem. These instructions were said to have been delivered by him; the great author of the *Mahabharata* himself made *Srikrishna* the speaker of *Gita*; it is the general belief of the Hindus from generation to generation, and reviewing the life of *Srikrishna* one would find that the explanation of many events of his eventful life lies only in the doctrines preached in the *Gita*.

When the two armies encamped in the field of battle and stood in battle array, *Arjuna* asked his friend *Srikrishna* to place his chariot in such a position as to allow him an opportunity to see the contending armies. *Krishna* did as requested and then *Arjuna* exclaimed:—"Seeing these kinsmen, O *Krishna*, standing here desirous to engage in battle, my limbs drop down, my mouth is quite dried up; a tremor comes on my body and my hairs stand on end; my bow slips from my hand; my skin burns intensely. I am unable too to stand up; my mind whirls round as it were. I see adverse omens and I do not perceive any good to accrue after killing my kinsmen in the battle. I do not wish for victory, nor sovereignty, nor pleasure. Even those for whose sake we desire sovereignty, enjoyments and pleasure are standing here for battle, abandoning life and wealth; preceptors, fathers sons

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as well as grand-father, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grand-sons, brothers-in-law, as also other relatives. These I do not wish to kill, though they kill me, even for the sake of sovereignty over three worlds, how much less than of this earth alone? Alas, we are engaged in committing a heinous sin, seeing that we are making efforts for killing our own kinsmen out of the greed of the pleasures of sovereignty! Tell me what is assuredly good for me, I am your disciple."

This is a very nice picture of the frame of *Arjuna's* mind who was expected to tread down every sort of *established* religious and moral virtues and to commit all sorts of *recognised* sins and vices. This becomes the state of the mind of all men and women at every step of their lives in this world,—a world where it is most difficult to know what is good and what is bad. That which is good to you, might be bad to me; that which is good to-day, might be bad to-morrow. Therefore every man and woman looks eagerly for a guide and cries like *Aryana*, "Tell me what is assuredly good for me." Had not *Srikrishna* put forth some thoroughly new doctrines and justified the acts on *moral grounds*, no sane man would have been willing to win the battle at such a moral and mental sacrifice. That which



satisfied *Aryana*, has satisfied the whole human race.

To him *Krishna* replied, "You grieve for those who deserve no grief. Learned men grieve not for the living, nor the dead. Never did I exist, nor you, nor those rulers of men, nor will any one of us ever hereafter cease to be. He who thinks it to be the killer, and he who thinks it to be killed, both know nothing. It kills not, is not killed. It is not born, nor does it ever die. Therefore knowing it to be such, you ought not to grieve."

This is the stand-point upon which *Sri-Krishna* builds up his philosophy. He says,—“This world is nothing but a shadow of an *invisible* world;—behind the visible shadow stands a world which is “everlasting, unchangeable, all-pervading, stable, firm and eternal.” This *visible* world is a mirage, having no *reality* and *stability* of its own. If that be the case, your so-called *actions* are like the changes in the mirage, and cannot have any *effects* whatsoever over the *invisible* universe. You can do whatever you like, but that will not do harm or do good to that wonderful world. You feel sorrow, for you think and believe that your *actions* will have *effects* on the real but *invisible* world,—no, nothing of

the sort. You are mere a shadow—a mere dream."

: Then *Srikrishna* goes on to say, "He whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks himself the doer of actions, which is every way done by the qualities of Nature. All beings follow Nature. That, O son of *Kunti*, which through delusion you do not wish to do, you will ~~do~~ *involuntarily*. The Lord, *Arjuna*, is seated in the region of the heart of all beings, turning round all beings, as though mounted on a machine, by his delusion." All this means in plain words that *you do nothing*;—you are really a shadow. Some body else, *i.e.* God, *acts*, and you by your egoism think that you act, which is not the case.

This is the true nature of the universe,—of both visible and invisible. The *invisible* universe is ever-lasting, unchangeable, all-pervading, stable and firm, whereas the *visible* world is changeable, transitory, finite &c. In the *invisible* world all is beautiful, sublime, pure, happy and godly; in the *visible* world all is not good, beautiful, happy or pure.

But whence then are these miseries, vices, crimes and sins in this *visible* world? Whence then are the unbearable pains and miseries, weeping and lamentations, and all that is bad, diabolical, wicked and vicious in this *visible* world of ours?

nothing but the *results* of the *actions* of a previous man. Man dies, but the effects of his actions live and produce another man. .

Delusion produces or creates man ; man produces *actions*, action produces effects ; effect produces fresh man, and so on till eternity.

This is the philosophy which *Krishna* created or perhaps accepted. For our belief is that this philosophy or something like it existed before his birth.

If we accept this philosophy, our way becomes very clear. On one side the all happy, all beautiful, all good, everlasting, unchangeable, firm, *invisible* universe, on the other the misery-stricken, painful, vicious, bad, transitory, changeable *visible* world. The former world is our *waking state* ; the latter world is our *sleeping state*. We are *really* unchangeable, everlasting, all beautiful, all good, all happy, — but on account of *delusion* we are unhappy, changeable, vicious, bad and miserable.

It now becomes our clear duty to be *awaken* from this sleep ; i. e., we *must* destroy the *delusion*. If we can do it, we become unchangeable, happy &c. &c. In short we get the so-called *Salvation*.

*Delusion* produces Egoism ; this *mental delusion* is the very root of egoism. This produces

in the mind the idea that *one exists*. When one feels *he exists*, he perceives the *existence* of a world around him. He *creates* himself and *creates* a world around him. This self-created world is surely real,—so long *delusion* remains to make one feel his *reality of existence*. But what makes one feel that *he exists*? He sees or *feels* that *he acts* (mentally or physically). When we find a human body which has no actions whatsoever, we call it a corpse. But man has two bodies, one physical and one mental or spiritual. Spiritual body guides, forms, and moulds the physical body; and it has also its *actions*. As physical body does not exist when it ceases to *act*, spiritual body also does not exist when it ceases to *act*. Therefore *action* is existence, Man minus *action* is zero. So long *action* remains, man *exists*. These actions might be the results of *delusion*, these actions might be the *actions* 'in a dream', but nevertheless they are *actions* and therefore they have *effects*,—effects 'in the same dream-land'. Every *action* has its assigned *effect*; your actions will always live in their *effects*; those effects again would produce fresh actions and so on till infinity. You may die or give up your physical body, but *effects* of your mental *actions* would remain and surely be

*efficacious*, by another spiritual or physical birth or by some other means. Thus *delusion* that creates you,—you a bundle of *actions*,—*delusion* that makes you *feel* your self-existence, will keep you *alive* till the end of days. You will have to pass through many births and deaths, through much weal and woe, through many vicissitudes. Your this *dream of self existence* will remain, so long *delusion* will have the possession of you. As a matter of fact you have no death, birth or re-birth,—but *you* who are created by your *delusion*, you who live in a dream, have surely births, deaths and re-births, all in that dream so long it continues. It is needless to say that it is not at all easy for a man to get rid of this *delusion*. Can man *forget* his own self?

#### [ 4 ]

*Srikrishna* said that it can be done away with by acquiring *knowledge*,—the effect of which would be *devotion* (devotional love.)

How could this mental delusion be removed? How could man awake from this sleep and see his real existence? *Srikrishna* says, "By *knowledge*, and the effect of knowledge is *devotion*." *Srikrishna* says, "The wise, who have obtained

devotion, repair to that seat where there is no unhappiness." Then he goes on, "When your mind will stand *firm* and *steady* in contemplation, then will you acquire devotion."

*Srikrishna* then went on to mention various ways and means of acquiring this "knowledge." He mentioned meditation, *Yoga* practices, devotion &c. That *delusion* can be destroyed by "knowledge" is not his original saying. It was told by many philosophers born before him; but there were differences of opinions about the *means* of acquiring this "knowledge." There were three recognised means in existence for acquiring knowledge; *Krishna* accepted all the three, namely, meditation, mortification and mental devotion. But when he was asked by *Arjuna* why he urged him to action when mental devotion is superior to action, he said, "Only through action can a man obtain freedom from action. Never for a single moment a man can exist without action. That of these two, devotion through action is the higher."

What actions are to be performed? *Srikrishna* answers, "*one's own duty*." He said, "The man, who performing the duties of life and quitting all *interests* in them, places them upon the supreme Being, floats like a lotus on the lake, unruffled by the tide."

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You are to do your *duties*,—whether they appear to you good or bad, painful or pleasurable, vicious or virtuous. He said, "He, who fulfils the office obligated by his own nature, does not incur sin. One should not reject the duty to which one is born, even if it be associated with error, for all human understandings are involved in error, as fire is by smoke." Religion had been ever considered the most difficult subject for human thought. To be happy in this world and the world next, to secure eternal rest and celestial bliss, to get salvation and heaven was the most difficult problem of mankind. The means, that were discovered or invented for attaining salvation, were so difficult to adopt that men were scared away from the path of heaven. It had become a common proverb that the path of heaven is full of thorns. It remained for *Srikrishna* to say that to attain salvation and to get eternal rest and celestial happiness was not at all *difficult*. It is as easy to get as the air or the water. The great love, that has given man air or water, has made the means of salvation also as easily accessible as any of them. To get this you need not go out of your way; you are not required to undertake difficult or impossible tasks. *Do your duties*, that is all; *and you will get salvation*.

This is the novel and grand teaching of *Sri-kishna*. "*Do your duties*" was the great command he issued. But these *duties* should be always *pure* and *good*. Every action of his eventful life was pure and was performed with the motive of doing some good. When the only grandson of the *Pandus* was born dead, he was asked to revive it. He came and said, "If I have not ever performed *a single impure or bad* act, let this child be revived."

But duty is always conditional. It was the duty of *Duryodhana* to give the just dues to his cousins; but when he failed to do his duty, it became the duty of the *Pandu* princes to win the battle and to do everything to win it. It was the duty of *Duryodhana* not to fight, but it *was* the duty of *Arjuna* to fight. How is then man to know his *proper duties*? *Krishna* said, by acquiring *knowledge*; by proper *education*; by knowing the accumulated wisdom of the past, (*Shastras*) &c. *Srikrishna* said, "*Do your duties*, whatever they might be; do not mind whether they *look* bad or good, provided you think you *ought* to do them."

But it may be true that my actions (doing my duties) do not make any *effect* whatsoever on the everlasting and stable *invisibile* world,—they



might be *mere actions in a dream*,—but so long I *feel* that I *exist*, these *actions* make me miserable in this world and there is every likelihood that they would make me miserable for eternity. How is then to avoid their evil or painful effects? *Srikrishna* said, "Every action of yours must be *free of self-interest*; practice actions without having any *ulterior* motive. Do not keep the least mind in the fruits of your actions."

The key-note of his teachings was told in a few words when he said, "He, who, regardless of the fruits of actions, performs the actions which *ought* to be performed, is the devotee." It comes to this then that you are to *act*, but without a *mind*, for mind without *desires* is an impossibility. If you can do it there will be no good or bad, virtue or sin to you. He himself said, "*Actions defile me not*, for I have no attachment for the the fruits of actions." *Srikrishna* asks us to do our duties,—but these actions must be, firstly, without *desires* and secondly, *pure and good*. Who can act without *desires*?

To a man, whose mind (which is the centre of perception of this visible world) is destroyed and who *sees* not this world, but the real world that exists behind, who has destroyed *delusion* and consequent sleep and dream, all acts are without any permanent results, they are mere shadows,—mere

dreams. He is like the sky which every moment takes various shades, shapes and colours, but does not *feel* whatsoever.

Who can be such a man? Only he who always *sees* clearly before him the invisible but real world, and who does not *see at all* the *visible* world. In the *Gita* it is mentioned that all the arguments of *Srikrishna* failed to convince *Arjuna* the *unreality* of the *visible* universe, and then he was obliged to show him the *invisible* world, which, when seen by *Arjuna*, at once drove out of his mind the delusion and made him *see at once* the *unreality* of this world.

To act without desires means that you must make your *actions* inefficacious. It means to act without a *mind*. In fact it is the simplest means to destroy delusion and consequent egoism of this visible world. As we have said *delusion* produces *Self*, *Self* is action. If you can make your *action* fail to produce any *effects*, your *action* will not produce further *action*, and it will come to an end. How this is to be done?

If we particularly examine human *actions*, we find no *action* is possible without *desire*,—*desire* for some effect and for some future fruits and results from the action. Action is impossible without a *mind*. So long there exists the *mind*, there *must* be *desire*. *Srikrishna* repeatedly says, "Act, do

whatever you like, but have no *desires* " Therefore it comes to this that *Srikrishna* asks us to *annihilate* the mind. Is it at all possible to do ?

It is not an easy task to *act*, without the *least interest* or the *desire* of receiving *some fruits* of those actions. *Srikrishna* said, " Do your duties, but do not desire to have any fruits by their performance." How is this to be done? He answered, "By destroying *delusion*." He mentioned four distinct means for doing it, namely,

- (1) Meditation,
- (2) Yoga practices,
- (3) Assiduity of love,
- (4) Doing one's duties without *desires*

He summarised his teachings in the following words. "If thou art not able to compose thy thoughts immoveable on me (throughout the *Gita* *Srikrishna* calls himself the Supreme Being,) then reach me by assiduous love and devotion. If thou art not capable even of assiduity of love, be intent on the performance of actions (duties). *Knowledge* is better than *assiduity* (of love), *contemplation* is preferred to *knowledge*, the *abandonment of self-interest* (or desires) in action to *contemplation*, —final emancipation results from such abandonment (abandonment of desires in action)" Thus we find the following four means (placed in order

of merit) were recommended by him for final emancipation.

1. *Actions without desires, (Duties.)*
2. *Contemplation (Samadhi).*
3. *Yoga practices.*
4. *Assiduity (of love.)*

But he gave preference to actions (duties),—but these actions must be *actions without desires*.

*Contemplation, yoga practices, and Assiduity of love* are not easy acquirements. If man wants to acquire salvation through these three means, they are to give up the world and retire into the deepest solitude and there undergo greatest mortifications and difficulties. Doing all this there will be *only one* in a thousand who will be successful. But to do one's duty without desires is not so difficult a task as any of these three. It can be done by every man and woman in every state of the society. How this is to be done?

*Srikrishna* says,—by concentrating the mind to one object. He has mentioned various means of concentration of mind, of which he gave preference to *devotion to God*. How this devotion is to be gained? By love—love towards Nature and Nature's objects and from the Nature's objects to Nature's God. Act,—but act only with the devotion to God; Act,—but act with love to God and God's works.

Is this impossible? *Srikrishna* said "No". We shall try to explain his words by quoting an example. The soldiers in a British army fight; they kill men and are killed, but they act without any *desires*, without any *mind*, they are under the orders of their General. They know not what they do; they move, they march, they run, they fire, but they know not for what object. They are like *dolls* in the hands of their General. They do what they are commanded to do. Their life, their object, their desires are all in their General's hand. To obey their General's command is their *duty* and in performing it they give their own lives, or take the lives of others—the others sometimes being their dearest or the nearest relatives. They know that whatever they do under orders from their General must be good, good for them and good for the country and the cause for which they fight. Their *mind*, with their conscience and all, is placed in the hands of their General.

From these soldiers it is evident that it is not *impossible to act* without *desires* and without a *mind*. It is possible only when man can *fully depend* upon another. If I know that I am not responsible for *my acts*, if I know that I have a *General* under whose orders I act and who will be responsible for all my acts, if I know I am not to think for myself,

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I have got one who will think for me, who will direct me to do that which would be good to me,—surely I can go on acting without troubling myself any way; surely in such a case I *can act* without any *desires* whatsoever and without any mind and anything else that I possess.

*Srikrishna* asked man to consider himself a doll in the hand of God; he asked man to think himself a soldier, God as his great General, his worldly acts as duties under orders. He asked them to act on the faith and belief that whatever, he does, are the works of God. He said, "With me (God) and me (God) alone, O *Arjuna*, seek shelter in every way. By my (God's) favour you will obtain the highest tranquility and the eternal rest."

Of course the example of the soldier and his general and that of man and his God is a comparison of a greater thing with the small; but we believe it would give some idea how a man *can act* without *desires* and without a *mind*.

*Srikrishna* repeatedly said, "If you want salvation, depend,—fully depend upon me (God). If you want to do your *duties* and if you want to *act* without *desires*, consider me (God) your guide, your all-in-all. Go on doing your *duties*, whatever they might be,—but *firmly believe* that I (God), am responsible for their results "



A soldier sees his general, but man does not see God. It is not an easy task to depend upon one whom we do not see and whom many of us cannot even *feel*. How is it possible for man to *depend* on such an invisible God! This is the very question which was put by *Arjuna* to *Srikrishna* and *Srikrishna* had to show him God; he had to make invisible God visible to *Arjuna*. But how others are to see God?

*Srikrishna* gave *Arjuna* an idea of God and told him the means by which man can *know* God. We need not dwell upon these philosophical points; but he finally said that it is very difficult for mortals to worship God in his unknowable form, therefore they should worship him in his *manifested form*,—namely the Universe. How one is to worship Universe? *Srikrishna* answers "By *Bhakti* or love.

*Srikrishna* asks us to have *absolute dependence* (faith) upon God, but he advises us to worship Him in his *manifested form*. A man in *delusion* can never know the unknowable God,—a man in dream can never know the place where he is asleep,—therefore, man must adopt some means which is within his power and by which he can have *faith* upon God. The *visible* universe is not false or untrue or unreal,—it is false, untrue and

unreal as man *sees* it in his *delusion*. The thing itself is real and true, but it is not the thing as man sees it. *Srikrishna* said that though universe as seen by man is not what it really is,—yet it is not false or unreal. This *visible* universe (though created by man on account of his delusion) is God's *manifested form*, i. e., the form in which man sees him in his *delusion*.

It is beyond man's (*deluded* man) power to know the real God,—therefore he should leave that God alone and consider this universe (this Nature) as His God ; if not God,—God's manifested form.

How can man *depend* upon Nature ? Is it at all possible ? Yes, it is possible. *Srikrishna* said it is by *Bhakti* (*love*) man can have *faith*,—dependence upon God (Nature).

What is *Bhakti* ? We should not understand by *Bhakti* what we understand by *love*. *Bhakti* is a love with admiration, respect and dependence ; it is the combination of all that is good, great and sublime in human mind. Can man love Nature in such a way ! Yes, he can.

A young man goes mad after a young girl when he sees some beauty in her. What is more beautiful than Nature ? But Nature is so vast that it is not so easy to see the beauties of Nature as to see those of a young girl. Man requires *culture*

to appreciate the beauties of Nature. If man gets the necessary *culture*, he will appreciate the beauties of Nature. To appreciate beauty means enchantment ; enchantment means *deep love*.

If I love a girl, I love everything belonging to her. If a man loves,—truly and really loves—Nature, he will love every thing of Nature,—from the burning sands of the desert to the chilly peaks of hoary-headed mountains, from the minutest insect to the highly cultured man, from the green soft grass to the biggest of the banians,—his love will be every where and in every thing.

When such will be his state he will see and feel Nature so grand, so beautiful, so sublime that he will perceive the *presence* of an unknowable Spirit all through the Nature. He will *feel* that Spirit so very grand and great that he will distinctly see how very insignificant his existence is. The comparison between Nature and himself will make him feel that he is mere an atom in the infinite Nature. It will destroy all pride in his breast,—he will daily feel that he is very very weak,—in fact he is nothing.

In one hand weak—very very weak man,—on the other the great, very very great SPIRIT,—on one side, helpless weakness,—on the other infinite strength. When man finds himself in such a posi-

tion, he can not withhold himself from jumping into the arm's of the Nature's Spirit for protection, for support, for life. The child feels his weakness and feels the strength of his parents; therefore the child depends upon them. A man can depend only when he feels himself very weak and upon him only whose strength and power he feels.

Thus we find that man requires culture to appreciate Nature; appreciation of Nature makes man love her; this love makes him feel the PRESENCE of a GREAT SPIRIT in Nature. This perception of the presence of the GREAT SPIRIT makes him feel his own insignificance and weakness and the greatness and infinity of the great SPIRIT. This feeling of helplessness produces in man dependence on God.

We shall try to make our arguments clearer by putting down the steps of attaining it as they should be attempted one after the other.

(1) Education.

(2) Culture.

This two would produce,—(1) "The appreciation of Nature," which would again beget,

(1) Love towards Nature,

(2) Absolute dependence upon God (faith).

Then man will be able,

- (1) To act without desires

What actions are to be performed? One's own duties.

- (1) To perform these duties without desires.

(2) To acquire knowledge to know one's proper duties.

The following will be the results:—

(1) Such actions (without desires) will not produce any effects.

(2) Actions without effects bring the actions to an end.

(3) These actions will not therefore produce any future actions.

(4) The visible existence of man is action; if action is destroyed, man's existence is gone.

(5) But he is really unchangeable and immortal,—therefore his visible existence will only be destroyed, he will not be destroyed.

He will then find himself in his *real* existence. His *delusion* is gone,—he is saved; he has become God according to the Hindus, the Budha according to the Budhists, Christ according to the Christians and a Pegumber according to the Mahomedans.

Let us now summarise the teachings of *Sri-krishna*. We find he asks man to adopt three things

ings? We learn that—Man is a part of an invisible, everlasting, stable, unchangeable, all good, universe, all-happy, which is unknowable by man; but man, though living in this unknowable-region, sleeps and dreams on account of *delusion (Maya)*. He dreams and his dreams are this visible world with its miseries, pains, deaths and mortifications. He dreams of many worldly (*this dream-created world*) births and deaths. To be happy and to get salvation, he *must* awake and see his *real* existence and *real* abode of living (which is the invisible world); he *must* destroy the *delusion* and get rid of the dream by which he sees himself in this visible world. There are four chief means of destroying *delusion*, namely, meditation, Yoga practices, assiduity of love and action without *desires*. He gives preference to the last. He says that this (action without desires) can be done by *full dependence (faith)* upon god. It is the *only* means by which man can act without any *desires* and any *mind*. If *actions* are without *desires*, they can have no *effects*; automatic *actions* produce no permanent results or future *effects*; if man can act without his *mind*, he feels nothing, for mind is the medium of senses and perception. When man can act without *desires*, he finds two results,—firstly, that his mind is in extinction,—his mind has been annihilated and conse-

quently he does not feel any pain or pleasure and secondly, that his *actions* will not produce any *effects* and therefore any further *actions*,—they will be at an end; therefore his *actions*, and consequently his existence (of this visible world) will come to an end. When thus his dream-created existence will come to an end, he will find himself suddenly in another existence,—his *real and true* existence,—his existence in the everlasting, invisible, all-happy, all-good world. What is this *invisible* world? It is beyond all human power to tell; it is unknowable by man. But it is the belief of the Hindus that it is nothing else but God. When man finds himself in this unknowable world, he finds himself in GOD.

Will thus his physical body be at an end? Necessarily not. Universe is *true*; but what we see of it in our delusion-created existence is *not true*. Our body might remain, the universe might remain, but we shall then in our freed-state (free from *delusion*) see them in another light,—a light which cannot be described, which cannot be conceived unless seen. When *Arjuna* heard all this from the lips of *Krishna* he said, "My *delusion* is destroyed; and by thy favour, O divine One, I have recovered my senses." Can we venture to hope that the *delusion* of our readers is also gone?



## BUDHA

[ 1 ]

**M**ORE than one thousand years had rolled away in the unknowable space of time from the day on which *Srikrishna* gave up his spirit under the shady branches of the great tree. Great changes had taken place all over the world. Powerful dynasties had disappeared, great names had sunk into oblivion; old cities had given place to new ones; and smiling countries had turned into deserts, rivers had changed their courses, and wide lakes had dried up. India was no longer the same India



which *Srikrishna* saw; she was no longer inhabited by the same men and women to whom *Srikrishna* preached his great religion.

The civilisation of India had not deteriorated,—her progress in the path of learning was not stopped. She had advanced in civilisation, in learning, in wealth and grandeur; but she had almost forgotten the great truths told by her greatest man; her sons had strayed away from the path pointed out by the great ONE.

But he himself was not forgotten; he had been deified; people had called him an incarnation of God and had worshipped and adored him in every village, in every town,—nay in every house. They had forgotten what he said and what he did; they had forgotten the path to celestial bliss, so clearly defined by him. They had begun to worship him as God, believing that such worship would lead them to their final rest.

His great teachings had been forgotten; where they were not forgotten, they were misunderstood. *Actions* had been distorted to mean sacrifices, worships, pilgrimage &c. *Light* had been explained to mean the *Vedas* and the religious odes and theologies; and *Love*, the greatest of all the three, had been thoroughly ignored.

Mankind was as miserable as ever. The burn-

ing thirst for happiness, for celestial bliss, for salvation, and for eternal rest was as keen as ever. All-destroying Time has almost wiped out of the face of the earth the great truths that are the only means to save mankind from everlasting misery. Man was as unhappy as ever.

But the love of Him, who rules over the destiny of man, is as infinite as his infinite universe. His great love towards man is beyond the conception of human mind. Man forgets Him and His words, but HE does not forget man. For the second time HE sent down his great Spirit to appear in human frame,—for the second time the unknowable Spirit of God descended from the heaven's height to explain to humanity the great truths which were told to them, but which were not understood.

The great and good man in whose hallowed body the all-merciful Spirit of God appeared for the second time was *Goutam*, known all over the world as *Budha*, the enlightened. It is often mistakenly considered that he preached a new religion,—a quite different and antagonistic religion to that of *Srikrishna*. He did nothing of the sort, he explained the words of the great Prince of the Yadu dynasty; he lighted up the path pointed out by *Srikrishna* and which was lost sight of by the people on account of the darkness of supers-

tition and ignorance which soon over-whelmed the world. A great writer says.

"Goutam was born, and brought up and lived, and died a Hindu. Many of his chief disciples, many of the distinguished members of his order, were Brahmins. He used the name Brahmana as a term of honour for the Buddhist saints. Buddhism was the child of Hinduism. Goutam's whole training was Bramhanism. He deemed himself to be the most correct *exponent* of spirit, as distinct from the letter of the ancient faith and it can only be claimed for him that he was the greatest and the wisest and the best of the Hindus."

These are the words of a celebrated foreign writer who has made Budha and his teachings the study of his life. The following short narrative of his life and teachings would tell the same tale.

## [ 2 ]

Budha was born about 500 years before the birth of Christ at a place called *Kapilavastu*, which was situated on the river *Rohini* and stood some 100 miles north-east of the city of Benares. The giant peaks of the hoary-headed Himalayas loomed up in the distance, and hundreds of stream-

lets rose from the surrounding hills and rolled away in all directions

*Kapilavastu* was the capital of a small kingdom, over which a dynasty held its sway and was known by the name of *Goutam*. The race whom the *Goutam* ruled was called *Shakyas*. At the time of which we are speaking, *Sudhadana Goutam* was the ruling chief of the *Sakyas*. He had two wives,—but both were childless. Therefore the rejoicing was great when in about the forty-fifth year the elder queen promised her husband a son. In accordance to custom she started for her father's palace with the intention of being confined, but it was on the way under the shade of some lofty trees a child was unexpectedly born. Both the mother and the child were carried back to *Kapilavastu*, where seven days after the mother died, but the boy found a careful nurse in his step-mother.

He was named *Shidhyarta* and was brought up as a prince of the great *Goutam* house should have been. We know very little of his early life,—it appears that the people complained in a body to the king that his son was much devoted to home pleasures, and therefore he neglected all manly exercises suited to a prince. But it is told that the young prince, being informed of the general

complaint, appeared in a great tournament and challenged and defeated all comers.

We hear nothing more of him until his 29th year, when young *Goutam* suddenly abandoned his home to devote himself entirely to the study of religion and philosophy. It is said that a mere accident turned him to the path of asceticism.

He and his attendant *Chanxa* went one day to roam about the town to see how the people were faring. He first met with an old man, then a sick man, then a corpse and lastly a dignified hermit. He was struck with the sights of extreme old age, sickness and death; he felt that he was also liable to all these three great enemies of human happiness; he felt that life with all its luxuries and comforts was nothing but a prey to old age, sickness and death. He also marked the calm dignity of the hermit,—a man who had severed his connections with the world. He thought that he might go beyond the reach of the worldly miseries by becoming a hermit. All these thoughts preyed upon his mind and he returned to his palace thoughtful and moody.

\* \* \* \* \*

He had already married and his wife, *Yosodharā*, had given birth to a pretty boy, who was named *Rahula*. The idea, that this new tie might

become too strong for him to break, seems to have been the immediate cause of his flight.

At midnight he sent his charioteer *Channa* for his horse, and whilst he was gone he went to the threshold of his wife's chamber and there by the light of the flickering lamp he watched her sleeping with one hand on the head of the child. He had wished to take the babe in his arms before he left, but he now saw he could not do it without waking the mother. He dared not wake his wife; he reluctantly took himself away and accompanied only by *Channa* he left for ever his father's home, his wealth and power, his young wife and only child.

Goutam rode a long distance not stopping till he reached the banks of the *Auoma* river. Then he handed over to *Channa* all his valuable ornaments and jewels and asked him to take them back to *Kapilavastu*. *Channa* entreated to be allowed to accompany him and to remain at his side as an ascetic, but Goutam would not hear of it. "How will my father know", said he, "what has become of me unless you go back and tell him?"

He bade a loving farewell to his beloved attendant and crossed the river. He then shaved his head and changed his clothes with a poor man. He hurried on towards *Rajgriha* to begin his new life of asceticism.

## [ 3 ]

*Rajgriha* was the capital of the kingdom of Magadha. It was situated in a pleasant valley, surrounded by five hills. In the caves of these hills several celebrated hermits had found it convenient to settle. Goutam went to these hermits and became the disciple of one *Ultra*, but being dissatisfied with his system he afterwards attached himself to another, named *Udraka*. He learned under them all that Hindu philosophy and religion had to teach.

At last he resolved to try the *yoga* practices. He withdrew himself into the Jungle of *Uruvila*, present Budha Gya, and there for six long years he passed through all the austerities of *yoga*. He was wasted away to a shadow by his severest penances. But by these means he did not get what he craved for, but his fame spread far and wide and a few disciples gathered round him. The more he thought the more he felt himself a prey to disappointment and mortifications. He was as far off from the land of peace and happiness as he was when a royal prince in the luxurious palace of his father at *Kapilavastu*. At last one day when walking he suddenly staggered and fell to the ground. Some of his disciples thought he was actually dead, but

he recovered and despairing of further profit from such penances, he gave up his self-mortification.

His disciples were taken aback,—his faithful followers thought that their leader had fallen from his righteousness. They forsook him and went away to Benares.

Goutam roamed about the wood; he had met with dire disappointment. He had studied all the collected wisdom of ages, he had carefully practised the *yoga* processes,—he had tried every *known* method to get "true happiness",—but alas, he had not been able to win that peace of mind for which he longed. It was not known amongst the hermits and monks; it was not known amongst the sages and philosophers, it existed somewhere, but none could point out to him the way.

Disenchanted and dissatisfied, thoughtful and meditating, he roamed about the wood. He was hungry, he was dispirited,—he knew not where to go and what to do. Would he go back to his kingdom, to his dear wife and beloved child? Or would he roam about the world, as a rudderless boat tossing over a tempestuous ocean?

A village-maiden marked his dejected look; she approached him in all her natural kindness and benevolence. She asked him in her sweet and lovely voice whether he was hungry and



whether he would accept a few eatables from her hands. Goutam raised up his eyes, and looked at her for some time. He then asked, "What is your name, my pretty sister?" "Reverend Sir," replied the girl, "my name is *Sujata*." "Yes", said Goutam, "I am *hungry*, very very *hungry*. My dear sister, can you satisfy my *hunger*?"

The innocent village girl did not understand that Goutam meant some other *hunger* than his physical cravings. She did not know what thoughts were in his mind. She placed some eatables before him and entreated him to partake of them. Goutam smiled and said, "Kind *Sujata*, will they satisfy my *hunger*?" "Yes, Sir", replied she, "they will".

Goutam sat himself down to eat them under the shade of a large tree, thenceforth to be known as the great Bo-tree or the tree of wisdom.

*Sujata* went away, but there he remained through the long hours of that day. We dare not penetrate into his thoughts of that eventful moment; but there he remained immersed in his own thoughts from the early morning to sunset. But as the day rolled away on its way to eternity his great *hunger* was really satisfied; he had grasped the solution of the great mystery of sorrow; he had at last found the way to heaven, he had received the "great light,"—he had become the *Budha*."

One thousand years ago under the shade of such a lofty tree the great Spirit, of all-merciful god that descended from heaven's height and appeared in the body of the prince of *Dwarka*, disappeared into the unknowable Unknown. One thousand years after under the shade of the same lofty tree the Spirit of God descended and appeared in the body of the *Goutam Budha*!

## [ 4 ]

With joy and ecstasy he rose and left the shade of the great tree. He moulded his steps towards the *Rajgriha* hills where his old teachers used to live. But finding that they were all dead he walked straight to Benares. On the way he met with an old acquaintance, named *Upaka*. "Hallo, friend," asked he, "whence comes it that thy form is so perfect, thy countenance so lovely, thy appearance so peaceful! What system of religion is it that imparts to thee such joy and such peace?" Goutam replied that he had overcome all worldly influences and ignorance, error and passionate cravings,—he had discovered the way to eternal and everlasting happiness.

"Whither are you going?" said *Upaka*.

"To Benares," replied Budha

"For what purpose?" asked the Brahmin. To which Gautama replied in the following celebrated verses:—

"I now desire to turn the wheel of the excellent law.

For that purpose I am going to the city of Benares,

To give light to those enshrouded in darkness,  
And to open the gate of Immortality to men."

Apparently unable to brook any such high-flown pretensions, *Upaka* curtly said, "Goutam, your way lies yonder." Thus saying he went away to the opposite direction.

Nothing daunted the new Prophet and he walked on to Benares. And within a few days he entered the deer-park in the golden twilight of the evening. It stood about three miles north of the city. Five of his former disciples were living in it. But he did not receive a welcome; they knew him to be no better than a heretic; when he had given up his penances, they could no longer consider him their "master." They gave him a mat to sit upon, but they addressed him by his name. He told them that he had found the way of salvation and having become a *Budha* he could show them also how to escape from the evils and miseries of ~~the~~. He argued and debated with his old dis-

ciples, he applied all his persuasive powers to bring them round to his own "faith;" and his efforts were successful. It was the aged *Kondanya* who first openly gave in his adhesion, but the others also soon accepted his plan of salvation.

Goutam remained for some time in the deer-park preaching his new doctrine only to those who came to him, but he preached to all without exception,—men and women, high and low, ignorant and learned all alike. Thus all of his first disciples were lay men and two of the very first were women. The first convert was a rich young man, named *Yasa*, who joined the small company of personal followers; the next were *Yasa's* lather, mother and wife,—but they remained as lay disciples.

Five months after the day when he sat under the Bo-tree and three months after his arrival in the deer-park he called together all his disciples numbering already sixty persons and sent them in different directions to preach and teach and to scatter the glad tidings all over the country. *Yasa* only remained in Benares near his parents; and Budha waited to see the effects of the mission of his disciples.

[ 5 ]

In the forest of *Uruvila* th—

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brothers who were celebrated hermits and far-famed philosophers. Their high reputation had attracted a large number of scholars round them and they were honoured and respected by kings and potentates. Goutam went to live among them ; but he did not live long in *Urucila* wood before one of the three great sages adopted his religion. His brothers and all their scholars soon followed his example. It is needless to say that this momentous event created a great sensation all over the country. People flocked to see what sort of man Buddha was and to hear what he had to say about salvation. He preached his religion broadcast and his followers daily grew in number.

brothers who were celebrated hermits and sages. Their high reputation had drawn a large number of scholars round them soon as he was honoured and respected by kings and of his Order Goutam went to live among them; but he went to dwell long in *Uruvila* wood before one of his followers. Many sages adopted his religion. His ascetic in yellow robes soon followed his self, but falling heedless to say that this moment-feet and burst a great sensation all over the land. Buddha established a great flock of monks to see what sort of man his wife *Yasadhara* became. Hear what he had to say to his Buddhist nuns. His religion broad-

## [ 6 ]

Goutam remained for a fortnight in the wood near *Kapilavastu*, visiting the town to attend the invitations of his relatives and admirers. One day his wife dressed their child, *Rahula*, in his best and holding him up to the window pointed out to him the passing Buddha. "That monk", said she, "is your father. Go to him and ask for your rights; say, I am your son and want my inheritance. Give it to me." *Rahula* went up to Goutam and said, "Father, give me my inheritance." Goutam was then engaged in his meal and made no reply.

the town. It was celebrated as the place where Goutam spent many rainy seasons and where to preached many of his famous discourses. followed

The enthusiasm of the people, the Budha cooled down as rapidly as it arose. He of his disciples were received with abuse and ridicule the noble went to beg their daily food. They gave him the ignominy and neglect, and they were admitted into do, the old king,

But Goutam received from his father his son and asking him to visit his native city,

see him once more before towards Rajgriha, accepted the invitation. One day on the banks of

He then he took farewell from his loving attendant *Channa*. Many of his relatives and countrymen were admitted into his Order,—four of them, namely his cousins, Ananda and *Devadattya*; a barber named *Upali* and a countryman called Anurudha, should especially be mentioned. Ananda was the most intimate friend of the Budha all through his life; *Devadattya* became his rival and opponent. *Upali*, the barber, rose to be one of the most important leaders of his Order and Anurudha was the greatest master of Buddhist metaphysics. After passing the rainy season at Rajgriha the Budha went to *Sravasti*, the capital of the kingdom of *Kosala*. Here a rich merchant allotted to him for his re-

vidence an extensive and beautiful wood, which afterwards became famous; for the Budha resided many rainy seasons there and many of his grand discourses were delivered when residing in this wood.

Thus passed the third year of his mission; from the 4th year to the 44th year we know very little of his works. Undoubtedly he spent these forty four years in his grand mission works,—in making rules and regulations for his Order, in consolidating his grand philosophy, in pointing out to his lay followers the way of purity and in delivering his sublime discourses.

What little we know of these forty four years of his life, we know in scattered form, in distorted and allegorical shape and in mysterious and chaotic state.

We quote below from a well known work a short sketch of his career from the 4th to the 20th year.

*4th year.* Goutam admitted a rope-dancer to the Order and lived in Mahabana.

*5th year.* He went to *Kapilavastu* to see his father who was dying. After the cremation he returned to Mahabana followed by his step-mother and his wife, who were accompanied by many ladies. They all earnestly asked him to be admitted to the Order, but the Budha was not willing to admit



them to the Order, but at last yielded to the earnest advocacy of Ananda. He then retired to a hill near Allahabad.

*6th year.* Goutam returned to Rajgriha and admitted *Kshama*, the queen of *Bimbisara* to the Order. One of his disciples displayed miracles, but the Budha strictly ordered that no miracles should be displayed, and he particularly enjoined that miracles had nothing to do with religion.

*7th year.* His opponents induced a woman, named *Chincha*, to accuse him of a breach of chastity, but her deceipt was exposed.

*8th year.* He passed on a hill near *Kapilavastu*, made some new converts and returned to *Kosumbi*.

*9th year.* A great dissension broke out in the Order. The Budha tried in vain to establish peace and amity. At last being disgusted, he left his disciples and went alone to the forest of *Parilyaka*.

*10th year.* The neighbouring villagers built for him a hut, where he spent the rainy season. Here the refractory Buddhist monks found him out and asked his pardon. They were forgiven and well received. With his repentant disciples he went to *Sravasti* and thence to Rajgriha.

*11th year.* He made some more important converts and passed his time in Magadha and *Kosala*.

12th year. He made his longest journey, going as far as *Mantala* and returning via Benares, preaching in all the places he visited.

13th year. He spent the year in *Chaliya* and *Sravasti* in delivering discourses.

14th year. He remained in *Sravasti*, where he delivered a discourse to his son *Rahula*. He then travelled to *Kapilavastu*.

15th year. The whole of the year he remained in the wood outside *Kapilavastu*, where he addressed a discourse to his cousin *Mohanama*, who had succeeded his father on the throne of *Kapilavastu*. He delivered also a discourse on the superiority of righteousness to alms-giving.

16th year. This year was spent at a place called *Alawi*.

17th year. He went to *Rajgriha* and passed the rainy season there. He preached a sermon on the occasion of the death of *Srimati*, a courtesan. He refused to preach to a hungry man until he had been well-fed.

18th year. He went to *Chaliya*, where he instructed a weaver who accidentally killed his daughter. After passing the rainy season there he returned to *Rajgriha*.

19th year. Goutam travelled through *Magadha* preaching in all the villages. On one occasion find-

ing a deer caught in a snare, he released it and fed it. The angry hunter tried to kill him, but he preached to him, who with all his family became his disciples.

*20th year.* He spent the year in preaching in villages and towns. In the forest of *Chaliya* he succeeded in overcoming by kindness a notorious robber named *Angulimala*; whom he persuaded to become a Buddhist Monk.

From the 21st year to the 45th year of his Budhahood we know almost nothing of his mission works. Perhaps one year was so much alike of the other, that his chroniclers did find nothing to narrate.

## [ 7 ]

It is evident that he had the highest respect for women. There are many stories related in which we find women devoting their lives and their substance to the new movement. One *Bishaka* of *Sravasti* was the most noted amongst those glorious instances of womankind. She presented a grove to the society and built a *Behar* (monastery) to the east of the town.

He gave honour even to women of the lowest birth and lowest character, declining the invitations of powerful potentates he accepted those of

public women and city courtezans. At *Kapilavastu*, at *Ambapuli* and in many other places he accepted the invitations of the courtizans of the place to the great offence of the nobles. At *Rajgriha*, to the utter bewilderment of the people, he preached a sermon on the occasion of the death of a public woman, named *Srimati*. Perhaps he never forgot *Sujata*, the village girl, who gave him food near the *Bo-tree* when he was both mentally and physically hungry;—perhaps he never forgot her words that the food offered would quench his great hunger; for indeed before that memorable day had rolled away in the unknowable space of time he attained Budhahood. Perhaps he saw an angel of light in *Sujata* and from *Sujata* to all womankind. To the good or bad, to the rich or poor, to the ugly or fair, to the high or low, his infinite love was the same everywhere.

"Action" was his motto. To organise the great Order of the Buddhist monks was his life's avocation; to teach people purity in their acts was his mission and to tell them the path of salvation was his work. We shall quote two instances to show how the Budha preached his religion.

"Kisagotami is the name of a young girl, whose marriage with the only son of a wealthy man was brought about in true romantic fashion. She had

one child, but when the beautiful boy could run alone, it died. The young girl in her love for it carried the dead child clasped to her bosom and went from house to house of her pitying friends, asking them to give her medicine for it. But a Buddhist monk said to her, "My good girl, I myself have no such medicine as you ask for, but I think I know of one who has." "O tell me who that is," said Kisagotami. "The Budha can give you medicine; go to him," was the answer. She went to Goutam and doing homage to him said, "Lord and master, do you know any medicine that may be good for my child?" "Yes, I know of some," said the Teacher. Now it was the custom for patients or their friends to provide the herbs which the doctors required, so she asked what herbs he would want. "I want some mustard seed," he said; and when the girl eagerly promised to bring some of so common a drug he added, "You must get it from some house where no son or husband or parent or slave has died." "Very good," she said and went to ask for it, still carrying her dead child with her. The people said, "Here is mustard seed, take it," but when she asked, "In my friend's house has any son died or a husband, or a parent, or a slave?" they answered, "Lady, what is this that you say! The living are few, but

the dead are many." Then she went to other houses; but one said, "I have lost a son;" another "We have lost our parents;" another "I have lost my slave." At last, not being able to find a single house where no one had died, her mind began to clear and summoning up resolutions, she left the dead body of her child in a forest and returning to the Budha paid him homage. He said to her, "Have you got the mustard seed?" "My lord," she replied, "I have not; the people tell me that the living are few, but the dead are many." Then he talked to her on that essential part of his system,—impermanency of all things,—till her doubts were cleared away and accepting her lot she became a disciple and entered the Order."

"On another occasion a wealthy Brahmin was holding his harvest-home when the Budha came and stood by with his bowl. The Brahmin was angry and said, 'I plough and sow and having ploughed and sown I eat. It would be better if you were in like manner to plough and sow and then you would have food to eat.'

'O, Brahmin,' was the answer 'I too plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat.'

'You say you are a husbandman; but we see no signs of it,' said the Brahmin. 'Where are your bullocks and the seed and the plough?'

of the monks, he declared that strict asceticism and rigidity of life should be enforced upon all Buddhists and asked the Budha to allow him to establish a new Order if he declined to accept his suggestions. The Budha declined, saying 'that his precepts could be kept in any place, that he had no objection to such members of the Order as wished to do so keeping stricter rules, but that they are not necessary and could not be kept at all by the young or delicate. As to food, the members of the Order might eat whatever was customary in the country where they were so long as they ate without indulgence of appetite. It was possible to become pure at the foot of a tree or in a house, in cast off clothes or in clothes given by laymen, whilst abstaining from flesh or whilst using it. To establish one universal law would be a hindrance in the way of those who are seeking *Nirvana* and it was to show men the way to *Nirvana* which was his sole aim.'

*Devadattya* left Goutam and found a new Order. He did not rest satisfied by founding a new religion and trying to destroy the great religion of the Budha; it is said that three times attempts were made on the life of the Budha by men, appointed by *Devadattya* or the king *Ajatsatru*. *Devadattya*, however, did not live long; but the king remained an enemy of Buddhism till his death. Only a year before Goutam's death

he not only over-run *Sravasti*, the head quarters of Buddhism, but totally destroyed *Kapilavastu*.

The Budha spent the 44th rainy season at *Sravasti* and then returned to the Vulture's Peak, a cave on the side of the loftiest of the five hills, overhanging the beautiful valley of Rajgriha. Thence he went towards, *Ambapali* crossing the Ganges at a spot where king *Ajatsatru* was then building a fort to keep his enemies in check,—the beginning of a town which afterwards became the capital of Magadha under the name of Pataliputra (modern Patna).

From *Ambapali* Goutam proceeded to *Belugamanakī*, where he spent the 45th rainy season, during which he was attacked by a severe illness. He openly declared that he could not live long. "In three months from now, O mendicants," said he, "the Budha will pass away, Goutama will die. My age is accomplished, my life is done. Leaving you, I depart having relied on myself alone. Be earnest, O mendicants, thoughtful and pure! Steadfast in resolve, keep watch over your own hearts? Whosoever shall adhere unweariedly to this Law and Discipline, he shall cross the ocean of the life and make an end of sorrow."

When he recovered from his illness and was able to walk he started for *Kushinagara*. On



reaching *Pari*, he was entertained by a goldsmith named *Chanda* who prepared for him rice and pork. After finishing his meal he walked on till he reached the banks of the *Kakushta*. He was obliged to rest here and being thirsty he asked his dear friend and disciple *Ananda* to bring him some water. Thus refreshed he bathed in the river and after resting many hours walked on to *Kushinagara*. At last he reached the town, but he felt that he was dying.

Being afraid that *Chanda*, the goldsmith, would reproach himself or be reproached by others, for his disciples were complaining that the great teacher had got worse by eating the goldsmith's dinner, he said to *Ananda*, "After I am gone, tell *Chanda* that he will in a future birth receive very great reward; for having eaten of the food he gave me, I am about to pass away. Say it was from my own mouth that you heard this. I received food from many men, but there are two that will be blest above all others,—that of *Sujata*, before I attained Buddhahood under the Bo-tree and that of *Chanda's* before I finally pass away."

[ 9 ]

He rested in a grove of trees and talked long and earnestly with *Ananda* about his burial and

about certain rules to be observed by the Order after his death. After hearing from the lips of his beloved friend and great Teacher that he would pass away in the course of the day, *Ananda* broke down and went aside to weep. But the dying Teacher missed him and sent for him. When he came and sat near him the Budha comforted him with the hope of *Nirvana*: "Oh *Ananda*," said he, "Do not let yourself be troubled, do not weep. Have I not told you that we must part from all we hold most dear and pleasant? No being, soever born, or put together, can overcome the dissolution inherent in it; no such condition can exist." For a long time, *Ananda*, you have been very near to me by kindness and in act and word and thoughtfulness. You have always done well: persevere, and you too shall be quite free from this thirst of life, this chain of ignorance." He then turned to the rest of his disciples and spoke to them on the insight and kindness of *Ananda*.

Soon after he grew worse and lay under the shade of the tree unconscious, and motionless. Slowly and weariedly the night wore on and the disciples all watched their Teacher in breathless anxiety. At midnight, a Brahmin philosopher came to ask the Budha some questions, but *Ananda*, fearing that the dying Teacher would not be able,

to bear a discussion, refused to allow him to come near the Teacher. Goutam heard the sound of their talking and asked what it was. When informed he told them to let the philosopher come.

After listening to his question he said, "This is not the time for such discussions. Listen and I shall preach to you my religion." Then he went on to declare that salvation could not be found without a purely virtuous life,—without attaining the eightfold paths of holiness *which begins with purity and ends in love.*

• When the philosopher was gone, the dying Teacher turned towards *Ananda* and said, "You may perhaps think that the work is ended now, our teacher is gone, but you must not think so. After I am dead, let the law and the rules of the Order, which I have taught, be a teacher to you."

A few minutes after, he laid down a rule, the last that he ever made in the Order. He gave instructions as to the mode in which the elder and the younger members of the Order should address one another.

He rested awhile, but soon after raised his head and laid a penalty on one *Channa*, who spoke indiscriminately whatever occurred to him. This was the last act he performed, as the leader and the master of his great Order.

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He remained silent for an hour or two,—then he asked all his disciples to come near him. Then addressing all his disciples he called upon all who had any doubt or misgiving as to any matter to ask him and he would resolve the doubt. "Let them not afterwards regret", said he, "that they have not asked when they had opportunity." But none uttered a word,—all were in tears.

After another pause he said, "*Bhikkhus*, (mendicants) I now impress it upon you, decay is inherent in all component things; work out your salvation with diligence."

These were the last words the great Prophet ever spoke. Shortly after he became unconscious and in that state passed away.

Thus died Sidharta Goutama,—once the prince of *Kapilavasta*, but finally, the Budha, the great Enlightened. Thus passed away the greatest Philosopher and Preacher that was ever born. Thus rolled down behind the horizon the great Sun that rose to drive away the darkness from the face of the earth and to light the path of salvation and to point out the hidden key that gives mankind access to the Temple of Eternal Bliss.

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## HIS TEACHINGS

[ 1 ]

**W**HAT great light received Goutam when sitting under the great Bo-tree? When he was born *Srikrishna's* teachings had sunk into oblivion ; —his great teachings of *Actions (without desires)* *Light and Love* had been neglected and forgotten. There were men living in the deep recesses of the forests and unaccessable caves of the mountains practising *yoga* or sitting in deep meditation, with the intention of attaining salvation, but they were a few and their successes or failures had little to do

through many books,—he searched every philosophy and all theologies to find out the means of salvation and the way to heaven; but alas, it was not there, it was no where! He then retired into the solitude of forests there to practise *yoga*. For six long years he passed through the severest penances and hardest *yoga* practices; but salvation was not to be found in *yoga*! He then passed several years in deep meditation and undivided contemplation; but no,—he did not get what he wanted. No salvation,—no final rest, —was to be had by *yoga* or *meditation*. At least he did not get it. Disgusted and disappointed he left the forest; he left the *yoga* and *meditation*; and he came and sat under the Bo-tree.

Day rolled on,—night slowly advanced towards the world, but before she had come to take possession of the earth, Goutam cried out like the celebrated Greek Sage, "*Eureka, Eureka.*" He had at last found what he was in search of; he had solved the great problem of humanity; he had found out the means of attaining salvation! What was it that Goutam received under the Bo-tree?

## [ 2 ]

After the death of *Srikrishna* two thousand years had rolled away over the world, making innu-

merable changes,—destroying many things old and producing many things new. People had again sunk into the deepest gulf of miseries and pains, vices and sins. There had become the highest relaxation of duty and increase of impiety. Mankind was going down and down into the bottomless abyss of sin and misery.—It had therefore become a necessity for all-merciful God, whose love for man is beyond all description and conception, to come down once more to protect *the good* and to destroy *the bad*, to show them the way to heaven and to lead them to the kingdom of eternal peace. The Spirit of God descended from the heaven's height and entered into the body of Goutam, when he was eagerly seeking the means of salvation,—not for him alone, but for all mankind.

What light did Goutam suddenly see before him? What did he find to be the means of salvation? It was the same as told by *Srikrishna*. It was *Action, Light and Love*.

It is a grave mistake to think that Goutam preached a different religion from that of *Srikrishna*. He himself said many times, “Whenever there is impiety in the world, the *Budha* is born to teach piety to man. Many a *Budha* was born and gone before me and many more would come hereafter. Perhaps the *Budha*

never heard the name of *Krishna* and never came across his teachings; but what he taught was exactly that which was taught by *Krishna* two thousand years before him. They were both the incarnations of the Spirit of the great God; their teachings therefore cannot differ from each other.

But as they were born at two different periods of time and to serve two different purposes, it is quite natural that their teachings would differ in many points; but as we shall presently show, they will be found to agree in the main; and the fundamental truths of the both are the same.

The Philosophy of the Budha is the same as that of *Srikrishna*. They both say that this visible world is changeable and transitory; it is nothing but a dream. *Actions* are the Supreme motive power. *Actions* produce *effects*,—hence re-births, hence miseries and pains, hence deaths and lamentations. The Budha said, "*As you sow, so you will reap.*" The Budha has given first place to *Karma* (actions), so did *Srikrishna*. He says, "Every thing dies, but *karma* lives and produces results. As your *karma* is, so your future will be."

How is then to control this *karma*, which seems to be the God of man's destiny? Man cannot live a moment without actions,—physical or mental. *Action* makes man miserable in this world and will



make man miserable in many more births and deaths. Is there no escape from this *karma*? The Budha answers, "Yes; attain *Nirvana* and you will get rid of *karma*."

### [ 3 ]

Now let us see what is *Nirvana*. The Budha says, "A man, who *controls himself*, enters the untrodden land (*Nirvana*) through his own *self-culture*." (Dhammapada, v. 160).

"When a man can bear everything without uttering a sound," said Budha, "he has attained *Nirvana*" (ibid, v. 134).

"*Desire* is the worst of diseases; if one knows *that* truly, that is *Nirvana*." (ibid, v. 203).

"*Santi* (celestial peace and rest) is *Nirvana*, the highest bliss." (ibid, v. 285).

Let us quote a passage from an eminent Sanskrit scholar who has made Budha his study "It (*Nirvana*) represented the entrance of the soul into rest, a *subduing of all wishes and desires*, indifference to joy and pain, to good or evil, an absorption of the soul in itself and a freedom from the circle of existences from birth to death and from death to a new birth." (Mux Muller).

*Nirvana* literally means *extinction*; blowing out.

Now the question is,—*Extinction* of what? The above extracts clearly indicate,—it means the *extinction* of *desires*,—it means the *extinction* of the *mind*. The State in which *mind* is gone, in which *all desires* are destroyed, that state is called the state of Nirvana. It does not mean that Nirvana is attained after death. Living man can attain *Nirvana*; the *Budha* attained *Nirvana* in flesh and blood; and those who attained Nirvana when living were called by him "Arahats". An *Arhat* says, "I await the appointed time for the cessation of existence. I have no wish to live, I have no wish to die. *Desire is extinct*."

*Srikrishna* said, "Destroy your *desires*, destroy your mind." The *Budha* said, "*Attain Nirvana*." But "to attain Nirvana," means nothing but "to destroy desires;" which again means, "destroy your mind."

*Budha's* meaning of Nirvana cannot be any thing else. When he said, "*Karma* (action) is supreme; *Karma* rules our destiny; *Karma* produces our future births and *Karma* is the root of all our miseries,"—he pointed out at the same time the means by which *Karma* might be made inefficacious,—by which *Karma* might be prevented from producing *results*. There is no other means to do it except the *total annihilation* of all

*desires* ; but it cannot be done without the *total annihilation* of the *mind*. We have discussed very clearly this point when dealing with the teachings of *Srikrishna*? Therefore *Nirvana* cannot mean any thing else but the *total annihilation of the mind*. Is this not exactly what was told by *Srikrishna*. He too asked us to *annihilate* our *mind*. The Budha gave a name to the state of man when his *mind is annihilated*, namely *Nirvana*. *Krishna* perhaps did not give any name for the state of man when his mind is annihilated and when he can *act without desires*. It is the only difference between Budha's *Nirvana* and *Krishna's Action without desires*.

But the Budha went further. He was born to go further. The above great truth was told by *Srikrishna* in more than plain words, but people could not understand them,—people forgot them,—people created new meanings out of them. The Budha came to revive the light that was blown out,—he came to explain what was not understood.

The Budha says, "The means of salvation is *Nirvana*,"—which means "*the Annihilation of the mind*." So long you will live, you will *have to act*. Action is existence.—These actions *must* therefore be performed without *desires* and without *mind*, so that they might not produce any results.

These were the very words told by *Krishna*, but they did not bear fruit long; they sank into oblivion, and people were as miserable as ever.

# [ 4 ]

Now, let us see what the Budha did to revive the light that was gone out. *Srikrishna* said, "*Depend upon God.*" It is the only means to destroy your mind, but man failed to do it. To them it became an impossible task. Therefore the Budha thought it better to displace God and place a new subject in its place. He said "*Depend upon yourself.*"

He found that it is not possible for man to depend *fully* upon God; in fact depending *fully* upon God means "forgetting one's own self which is almost an impossible task. Therefore he worked out a grand and sublime process by which man can go up step by step to the state of *Nirvana*."

Did the Budha discard God? Was he an atheist? Pity it is that the incarnation of God himself had been taken for an atheist! We do not know how the Budha, in whom the Spirit of God appeared, could deny God?

When he attained *Budhahood* under the great

and all his followers. He believed in Budha and became a Budha. He said, "Every man can become a Budha like me; when a man achieves *Nirvana*, he becomes a *Budha*. Man feels a separate wordly existence on account of *ignorance*;—if the *ignorance* is destroyed, he at once finds himself a Budha." Is not this exactly what *Srikrishna* preached?

But the difference in their teachings lies in this,—that one asked us to *Depend on God* to attain salvation,—the other discarded God from the process of attaining *Nirvana*. *Srikrishna* said, "*Depend upon me* and you will find that you and I am the same;" but the Budha said, "*Depend upon yourself* and aspire to be a *Budha*."

But in fact both these teachings lead to the same thing. *Srikrishna* said, "*Depend upon me* and it will destroy your *desires* and annihilate your *mind*. Your *actions* will then have no effects,—they will come to an end. If your *action* ceases, your existence no longer remains. But you are not thus annihilated; you still live in an *unknowable* existence, which is celestial, everlasting and unchangeable." The Budha said, "*Depend upon yourself* and work out your own salvation. *Nirvana* will lead you to salvation. To attain *Nirvana*, annihilate your *desires* and *mind*. If

you can annihilate your mind, all actions,—both physical and mental,—will cease, which means, that you will lose your *this worldly existence* and will become a great *Budha*." Srikrishna says, "You will enter *an unknown happy state*." Does not the Budha say the same? Budhahood is also *an unknowable happy state*.

"*Depend upon God*," failed; or it is better to say it became too high a task for mankind. Therefore the second Prophet tried a second process for the salvation of mankind, namely, "*Depend upon yourself*." He gave preference to *light* (knowledge) and worked out a grand process by which man can gradually attain *Budhahood*.

## [ 5 ]

Let us now see what was the process of salvation that the Budha preached. He created two distinct Orders in the followers of his religion,—one was the Order of *Bishkus*, (mendicants) and the other was that of the *householders*. To the members of both the Orders, he enjoined *Action*. "Act, act" was his command.

The Mendicant had three distinct tasks, namely (1) to acquire knowledge, (2) to teach householders and (3) to work out their own Nirvana. The

acquire *love* that asks 'no return? The Budha says,—"*By knowledge.*"

Knowledge leads man to mental culture; mental culture leads to the development of mental faculties; the development of mental faculties leads to universal love,—love to Nature and Nature's objects. This finally leads to Nirvana. Therefore *knowledge* is the most important and the *first step* in the attainment of Nirvana. The Budha gave first importance to *knowledge*; he worked out a grand system by which man can acquire *knowledge*. ♡

His monks' most important *duties* were, *to acquire knowledge and to diffuse knowledge.* They lived in monasteries and passed their lives in acquiring *knowledge*. They lived the simplest lives, begging their food from door to door and diffusing knowledge from house to house. They passed their lives in mental and moral culture teaching the people holy-living and setting before them the noblest examples of virtue and love. All that they did for the benefit of the people were done by them without the *least desire* of any sort of a return. It was the first step of theirs *to destroy desires*. When they were successful in it, when they were successful in doing *fully disinterested good* to the people, they then tried *to destroy their desires* for any present or future ,

happiness of their own. A man, who can *act thoroughly without any interest* in all matters of the world, can surely in time do the same with regard to his own Self. When a monk attains to this state, he becomes an *Arahat*; he is at the threshold of Nirvana,—he is then on the way of attaining Buddhahood.

Perhaps this is the grandest, and at the same time the simplest religion that was ever preached in this world. Be thoroughly *educated*, and make your life *perfectly pure*. Acquire *knowledge* and the result would be *perfect purity* in all your actions. Pass your life in doing *disinterested good* to all;—to all universal objects, whether animate or inanimate. This *disinterestedness* in your *actions* will gradually lead you to universal love, which is *the gate* of Nirvana. More than once the Budha said, “The path of salvation *begins with purity and ends in love.*”

The Budha gave the greatest possible stress on *purity*; for without *purity* man can never acquire universal love. *A bad man, can never love*;—and without *love*, Nirvana is never attained. He made no rules—no laws; no hard and fast regulations;—his command was “*Be pure; love the universe; do disinterested good.*” His monks lived as each preferred to live, but all tried to



*living* is and which are the *pure acts*. Both to monks and to the householders Nirvana is accessible. Salvation is at every body's door. It requires no religious sacrifices, worships, mortifications and troubles,—it can be achieved by the rich as well as by the poor, by the learned as well as by the ignorant, by men as well as by women. It does not ask man to do this or that,—it does not say, love this and hate that,—it does not demand much from man;—it is as available,—as easy to be had,—as the water of the sky or the air of the atmosphere. All man is equal,—all man is entitled to attain it. Let all come hand in hand in *purity* and *love*; and *all will reach* the land, where there is no death, no change, no miseries, no pain;—where all is blissful and all immortal;—where man is the Budha,—where father and son, God and man, are the same,—where the heaven and the earth have no separate existence.

This is the religion of the *Budha*; this was the religion of *Srikrishna*; this is and will be the religion of all *Budhas*. This is the only religion for mankind,—this is the only path through which man can attain salvation.

Should we say what light the Budha received under the ever-famous Bo-tree? It was those three old words,—the words that echoed and re-echoed.

on the beautiful banks of the Jamuna and the fearful field of *Kurukshetra*;—it was the three great old words—*Action, Purity and Love.*

[ 6 ]

We shall now speak a few words on the general teachings and the mission works of the Budha. We shall then see what effects Budha's religion made on mankind in general.

The Budha made elaborate rules for the monks of his Order and he formulated some beautiful moral precepts for the householders. We have hardly space enough to do justice to the grand and sublime rules and laws of his Order, we shall therefore quote here only a few of his moral precepts and general doctrines.

When Goutam, just before his death, took his last formal farewell of the assembled Order, he said, "Oh, mendicants, thoroughly learn, and practise, and perfect, and spread abroad the Law, thought out and revealed by me, in order that this religion of mine may last long, and be perpetuated for the good and happiness of the great multitudes, out of pity for the world, to the advantage and prosperity of gods and men. What is that Law? It is (1) the four *Earnest Meditations* (2) the four

Great *Efforts* (3) the four Roads to *Saintship* (4) the five *Moral powers* (5) the seven kinds of *Wisdom*, and (6) the *Noble Eightfold Path*." (Rh. D. *BUDHIST SUTTAS*, pp. 61-63.)

This is the sum and substance—a short summary,—of the teachings of the Budha. We shall now try to explain each of the above doctrines.

1. The four *Earnest Meditations* are meditation,
  - (a) On the impurity of the body.
  - (b) On the evils which arise from sensation.
  - (c) On the impermanence of ideas.
  - (d) On the conditions of existence.
2. The four *Great Efforts* are the efforts,
  - (a) To prevent bad qualities from arising.
  - (b) To put away bad qualities which have arisen.
  - (c) To produce goodness not previously existing.
  - (d) To increase goodness when it does exist.
3. The four Roads to *Saintship* are four means by which it is attained, namely,—
  - (a) The will to acquire it.
  - (b) The necessary exertion.
  - (c) The necessary preparation of the heart.
  - (d) Investigation.
4. The five *Moral Powers* are —

- (a) Faith.
- (b) Energy.
- (c) Recollection.
- (d) Contemplation.
- (e) Intuition.

5. The seven kinds of *Wisdom* are,—

- (a) Energy.
- (b) Recollection.
- (c) Contemplation.
- (d) Investigation of Scripture.
- (e) Joy.
- (f) Repose.
- (g) Serenity.

6. The Noble *Eightfold Path* are.

- (a) Right Belief.
- (b) Right Aims.
- (c) Right Speech.
- (d) Right Actions.
- (e) Right Means of livelihood.
- (f) Right Endeavour.
- (g) Right Mindfulness.
- (h) Right Meditation.

This Path is called *Middle Path*, that is to say, in being free on the one hand from devotion to the enervating pleasures of sense which are degrading, vulgar, sensual, vain and profitless; and on the other from any trust in the efficacy of

the mortifications practised by ascetics, which are painful, vain and useless.

This middle course (path) of a virtuous life, resulted from four fundamental truths, called *Four Noble Truths*,—namely (1) Suffering (2) the Cause of Suffering (3) the Cessation of Suffering (4) and the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering.

(1) *Suffering*.—Birth is sorrowful; growth, decay, illness, death, all are sorrowful; separation from objects we love, hating what cannot be avoided and craving for what cannot be obtained, are sorrowful; briefly such states, of mind as co-exist with the consciousness of individuality, with the sense of separate existence, are the states of suffering and sorrow.

(2) *The Cause of Suffering*.—The action, of the outside world on the senses, excites a craving thirst for something to satisfy them, or a delight in the objects presenting themselves, either of which is accompanied by a lust of life. These are the causes of sorrow.

(3) *The Cessation of Sorrow*. The complete conquest over and destruction of this eager thirst, this lust of life, is that by which sorrow ceases.

(4) *The path leading to the Cessation of Sorrow*,—is the Noble Eightfold Path

The Budha said, "Enter on this Path and make an end of sorrow: verily the Path has been preached by me, who have found out how to quench the darts of grief. You yourselves must make the effort: The Budhas are only preachers; the thoughtful who enter the Path are freed from the bondage of the deceived."

What is this Path then? We have already mentioned that this Path has Eight Divisions, namely, Right Views, Right Aims &c.

The Path has also four Stages, as follows:—

1. *First Stage*.—When a man arrives at a perception of the *Four Noble Truths*, (viz, Suffering, the Cause of Suffering &c.,) he becomes converted. One can arrive at the perception of the *Four Noble Truths* by the help of one or more of the following means, (a) Companionship with the good (b), Hearing of the Law (c), Enlightened Reflection, and (d) the Practice of Virtue. While in this first Path a man becomes free successively (1) from the delusion of Self, (2) from doubt as to the Budha and his doctrines and (3) from the belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies.

2. *Second Stage*.—Thus freed from doubt and the delusions of Self and ritualism man succeeds in this Path in reducing to a minimum lust, hatred and delusion.

3. *Third Stage.*—In this Path the last remnants of sensuality, malevolence being destroyed, not the least low desire for oneself or wrong feeling towards others can arise in the heart.

4. *Fourth Stage.*—The fourth is the Path of the *Arahats*, the men set free by insight in which the saint becomes free from desire for material or immaterial existence; from pride, and self righteousness and ignorance.

This is the briefest possible description of the Buddhist Religious System. This is the Process created by the Budha for the attainment of salvation ; these are the Steps built by Goutam to go up to the Temple of Eternal Peace and Rest.

## [ 7 ]

We have already said that the Budha divided his followers in two distinct classes, namely the Order of Monks and the Boudha Householders. He made elaborate rules for the members of his Order and most beautiful moral precepts for his lay followers. We shall now quote a few of his moral precepts intended for the Householders.

The following are the chief duties of the householders.

“Now I tell you of the life which a householder”

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should lead, of the manner in which a disciple should conduct himself well. Such duties which are peculiar to a monk cannot be fulfilled by one who has a family."

"Let him not destroy or cause to be destroyed *any life at all* or sanction the acts of those who do so. Let him refrain from even hurting any creature, both those that are strong and those that tremble in the world."

"A disciple should refrain from *stealing anything* at any place, should not cause another to steal anything, should not consent to the acts of those who steal anything, should avoid every kind of theft."

"A wise man should avoid in chastity as if it were a burning pit of live coals; one, who is not able to live in a state of celibacy, *should not commit adultery.*

"When one is come to a royal assembly or an official enquiry he should *not tell lies* to any one, or cause any to tell lies or consent to the acts of those who tell lies, he should avoid every kind of untruth "

"The householder should not indulge in *intoxicating drinks*, should not cause others to drink, should not sanction the acts of those who drink, knowing that it results in insanity "



The following general rules of a householder's duties are most beautiful.

### General Duties.

#### PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

*Parents should—*

1. Restrain their children from vice.
2. Train them in virtue.
3. Have them taught arts and science.
4. Provide them with suitable husbands, or wives.
5. Give them their inheritance.

*The child should say :—*

1. I will support them who supported me.
2. I will perform family duties incumbent on them.
3. I will guard their property.
4. I will make myself worthy to be their heir.
5. When they are gone, I will honour their memory.

#### PUPILS AND TEACHERS.

*The pupils should honour their teachers.*

1. By rising in their presence.
2. By ministering to them.
3. By obeying them.
4. By supplying their wants.
5. By attention to instructions.

*The teacher should show his affection to his pupils—*

1. By training them in all that is good.
2. By teaching them to hold knowledge fast.
3. By instruction in science and lore.
4. By speaking well to them, to their friends and companions.
5. By guarding them from danger.

#### HUSBAND AND WIFE.

*The husband should cherish his wife.*

1. By treating her with respect.
2. By treating her with kindness.
3. By being faithful to her.
4. By causing her to be honoured by others.
5. By giving her suitable ornaments and clothes.

*The wife should show her affection for her husband :—*

1. By doing her household works aright.
2. By being hospitable to kinsmen and friends.
3. By being a chaste and faithful wife.
4. By being a thrifty housekeeper.
5. By showing skill and diligence in all she has to do.

## FRIENDS AND COMPANIONS.

*Man should minister to his friends.*

1. By giving presents.
2. By courteous speech.
3. By promoting their interest.
4. By treating them as his equals.
5. By sharing with them his prosperity.

*Friends should show their attachment to him—*

1. By watching over him when he is off his guard.
2. By guarding his property when he is careless.
3. By offering a refuge in danger.
4. By adhering to him in misfortune.
5. By showing kindness to his family.

## MASTERS AND SERVANTS

*The master should provide for the welfare of his dependants.*

1. By apportioning work to them according to their strength.
2. By supplying suitable food and wages.
3. By tending them in sickness.
4. By sharing with them unusual delicacies.
5. By now and then granting them holidays.

*Servants should show their attachment to him as follows ;—*

1. By rising before him.
2. By retiring later to rest.

3. Being content with what is given to them.
4. Working cheerfully and thoroughly.
6. Speaking well of him.

#### LAYMEN AND THOSE DEVOTED TO RELIGION.

*The honourable man ministers to mendicants and Bramhans—*

1. By affection in act.
2. By affection in words.
3. By affection in thoughts.
4. By giving them a ready welcome.
5. By supplying their temporal wants

*The monks should show their affection to him—*

1. By dissuading him from vice
2. By exhorting him to virtue.
3. By feeling kindly towards him.
4. By instructing him in religion.
5. By clearing up his doubts.
6. By pointing the way to heaven.

We can quote many more such beautiful precepts, but we have hardly space for more. It would suffice if we say almost all the moral precepts now observed all over the world did originate from the great Budha

We shall now try to give a short account of the great Order

1. *Admission*.—For admittance into the Order no other credentials were required than the mere wish of the applicant. He had to state that he was free from contagious disease, consumption and fits, that he was neither a slave, nor a debtor; and that he had obtained the consent of his parents. At first the candidate was admitted merely having his head shaved, putting on the orange-coloured robes and leading a retired life.'

2. *Food*.—'No monks can eat solid food except between sunrise and noon and total abstinence from intoxicating drinks is obligatory. The usual mode of obtaining food is for the monks to take his begging bowl, and holding it in his hands to beg from house to house. He is to say nothing, but simply stand at the door. If any thing is put into his bowl he utters a pious wish for the giver and passes on. When enough has been given he retires to his place of residence to eat it.' (Rhys. D.)

3. As for clothing, residence and occupations the Budha did not make any hard and fast rules. His monks used three pieces of the orange-coloured cloths; they could live where they liked; they generally used to live in large monasteries, built by the lay followers.

The following might be said to be the daily life of the Monks.

'He shall rise before day-light and wash ; then sweep the *Vehara*, fetch the drinking water for the day, filter it and place it ready for use. Retiring to a solitary place, he shall then meditate on the regulations. Soon after, taking the begging bowl he is to follow his superior in his daily round for food, and on his return is to bring water for his feet and place the alms bowl before him. After the meal is over, he is to wash the alms bowl. About an hour afterwards he is to begin his studies from the book, or copy one of them, asking his superior about passages he does not understand. At sun-set he is again to sweep the *Vehara* and lighting a lamp to listen to the teaching of his superior and repeat such passages from the Canon as he has learnt. If he finds he has committed a fault he is to tell his superior. He is to be content with such things he has and keeping under his senses to grow in grace without haughtiness of body, speech or mind.' ( Rhys. D )

This is the Religion of the Budha. Let us now see what effect it made on the mankind in general.

[ 9 ]

For 45 years he passed every moment of his life

in mission works, in preaching his gospels to all alike, in sending out missionaries to all directions, in organising the monasteries and colleges and in extending his religion all over the world. His missionaries went as far west-ward as China and as far eastward as Europe; they went to the Tartary in the north and Cylon in the south. And the Budha's religion was welcomed everywhere. People in hundreds and thousands hastened to enlist themselves under his banner. The reason was not far to seek. His religion was *the simplest and the purest*. In it all was equal,—there were no caste, no creed, no class, no plebian and patrician, no Brāmhān and Chandal: no distinction and difference whatsoever. In his religion there were no costly sacrifices, painful mortifications, priestly persecutions and unintelligible mysticisms. His religion was all plain, all simple, all pure. In his religion purity and morality were valued and respected; in his religion there was the universal love; in his religion there was the hope for certain salvation for all. These were the reasons why his religion was welcomed wherever it reached; these were the reasons why man in every house, where a Buddhist monk ever came to beg his food, adopted the religion of the Budha.

Such was the grand organization<sup>4</sup> of his Order that after his death his followers continued his

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great works and spread his religion far and wide. India, from the hoary Himalayas to the island city, from the Indus to the Bramhaputra, adopted the religion of the Budha. It spread out of India,—it covered all the countries as far as the Pacific Ocean in the east and the Mediterranean in the west; it converted all the people of Tibhet, Tartary, and of countries as far North as the Arctic Ocean. The whole of Asia from sea to sea adopted the grand and sublime religion of the Budha.

But these were the direct effects of the Budha's preachings and his matchless missionaries' indefatigable works; but these were not all. His religion made indirect effects over the enlightenment and civilisation of Europe,—nay of the whole world. Christianity is but a child of Buddhism. Jesus was brought up in Buddhism and preached the adopted morals of Buddhism; the Christian apostles adopted all the rules of the Buddhist Order of the monks.

But this was not all. Seven hundred fifty years after the birth of Christ a great man, well-known in the Christian world as St. John of Damascus, wrote a book, called "Barlaam and Josaphat." It is well-known that the story of "Barlaam and Josaphat" became a most popular book during the middle ages. In the East it was translated



into Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, Armenian and Hebrew; in the West it existed in Latin, French, Italian, German, English, Spanish, Bohemian and Polish. As early as 1204 A.D. it was translated into Icelandic and latterly into the language of the Philippine Islands. It is a well-known fact that this most popular book helped to spread the kingdom of purity and virtue all over Europe. Perhaps without the popular story of Josaphat, which was read in almost every household in Europe, Christianity would not have so soon spread over the chilly lands of the West. But Europe and Christianity have honoured Josaphat; they have placed him in the rank of saints. In the Eastern Church 26th August is the St. Josaphat's day and in the Roman Martyrologium November 27th is assigned to the Saint.

Now who is this St. Josaphat? The author, John of Damascus, said that the Saint was a son of an Indian king, but he became a hermit afterwards. He added that he heard the story from men who came from India. It has been now proved beyond all doubt that Josaphat, which means *Budhisattva*, was no other than Goutam Budha of *Kapilavastu*. (Read Muxmuller's, *The Migration of Fables*). The whole story of Josaphat is so similar with the life of the Budha as narrated in the

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*Lalitavistara* that either the author of Josaphat had read that book or heard the story from one who had read it and remembered it so well as to repeat it in all its details

One thousands and three hundred years have passed away after the death of the great Budha. His religion has changed beyond recognition;—his simple and pure Gospels have been turned into a mass of unintelligible canons. But still one third of the human race adore and worship him as their God. Though his religion has disappeared from India, yet he is not forgotten, nor is he dishonoured or disrespected. He has been acknowledged as one of the incarnations of God. Though his religion is gone from India, yet the religions, which exist, breathe in the spirit of the great Budha. And as for Europe,—time will come when she will acknowledge the debt of gratitude that Christianity owes to the religion of the Budha,—but still Budha lives amongst them in the person of their honoured Saint,—Josaphat of India

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## APPENDIX.

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### OTHER PROPHETS.

#### [ I. ]

WE have said that besides the four great men who came to show us the path to heaven, there were a few more who graced India with their holy births and explained or preached the parts or the whole of the GREAT TRUTH. We do not mean that these great men were lesser prophets ; it is impossible to make any distinctions amongst men in whom the great Spirit appeared for a particular purpose,—a purpose only known by the unknowable Providence. But we know by the study of the lives and teachings of these great men that they appeared to explain the great truths, preached by Srikr̥ṣṇa and the Budha ; they came to explain away the differ-

ences that arose in their teachings; they were born to smoothe down the quarrels that arose amongst the followers of various religions.

After a long life of missionary works the Budha passed away; but his religion did not disappear with him. His beloved followers carried on his works and spread his religion far and wide. About three hundred years after his death, Asoka, the King of the Magadha, became an enthusiastic follower of the Budha and took every possible means and spent immense sum of money to spread his religion. The whole of India from the Himalayas to the sea was covered with the religion of the Budha,—it spread out of India and extended as far east as the Pacific Ocean. But extension of religion meant deterioration of its vital truths. Budha's religion did not escape from the rusts that gathered round it in age. As his religion extended over half of the world, as it passed through many a decade, it outgrew itself,—its vital truths, its simplicity, its purity, its best parts were forgotten, it became a complicated atheism,—a mass of unintelligible dogmas and a superstitious idolatry. The real and true Buddhism was gone.

Budha's religion had destroyed the religion of the Aryans, long before his birth. Srikrishna's

teachings had fallen into oblivion ; and complicated philosophies and unintelligible theologies had reigned in the place of the simplest religion of the earth. The Budha was born to revive the simplicity of religion,—he was born to revive the light that was gone out,—he came to explain the great truths once preached,—but alas, his religion met with the fate that had befallen that of Sri-krishna? It fell into oblivion and was washed away by the flood of priestly bigotry and ignorant superstition.

• Within a thousand years after the death of the Budha, India had neither the religion of Srikrishna nor that of the Budha. Simplicity in religion was gone. On one hand the Hindu bigotries and superstitions had raised up their heads and on the other the Budha's sublimity had cowed down its head. On one hand God had been made into many manifestations ; on the other He had been totally ignored and denied. On one hand Pantheism had been introduced and on the other Atheism had been let loose amongst the masses.

Can Ever-merciful Father of the Universe leave humanity in such an abject state of helplessness and misery? His great Spirit, ever fond of mankind, came down from the heaven's height and appeared in a man who saved the spirits of the

Hinduism and Buddhism from final death. He collected all the beauties, sublimities and truths of old Aryanism and the dead Buddhism in one place and formed them into a philosophy, a theology and a religion. This great man was *Sankarāchārjja*. With him disappeared the unintelligible canons of Buddhism and philosophical dogmas of Hinduism.

But he retained the vital truth of the Budha's teaching,—namely "man by self-culture can become the God." *Sankar's* philosophy was based on this truth; he tried to pick up from every religious book this fundamental truth and wrote innumerable commentaries on the Hindu religious books to prove that every *Sāstra* proved his assertion. But the reason, for which Budha's teachings finally landed on atheism, was equally good in the case of *Sankar*. His religion,—at least this fundamental truth of his religion,—was too unintelligible for the masses. They grovelled as usual in darkness and lay drowned in superstition.

Thus the Spirit of the Ever-merciful Creator again had to come down and appear in flesh and blood. The man whose body was thus hallowed was named *Rāmānuja*. He came to supply the want left unsupplied by *Sankar*; he came to place before man an intelligible and conceivable God. It is impossible for man to know the unknowable God—

but unless they get a God to love and to adore, to worship and to pray, to thank and to praise, man cannot be happy ; he has no escape from superstition and ignorance.\* *Rāmānuja* deified a hero,—perhaps the greatest hero known in that age. He placed Godhood on *Rāma* and tried to fill up the gap left unfilled by *Sankar*.

But alas, man loves to grovel in ignorance and superstition ! *Sankar* and *Rāmānuja* could not save him from his downward course. India became the field for the grossest superstitions and ignorance.

Thus many a long year passed—India had no religion, so to speak. India's greatest glory,—religion,—disappeared from her unholy land. Just at this period a great religion entered India from the west,—it was Mahomedanism. It was a religion that rose to destroy idolatry and to declare the existence of one God. India had fallen so low that she had forgotten the words of her own great sages and believed the existence of thirty three millions of gods and goddesses. She had fallen so low that she had to learn this great truth from men that came from the wildernesses of the west. When Mahomedanism entered India it had met with the same deterioration as the old religions of India. It had become the creed of the wildest and most fanatic race of men ; and

India passed through many a bitterest year under their invasions and rule.

Once more the true religion made an attempt to raise up its head. Almost simultaneously the great Spirit of God appeared in the hallowed bodies of three great men. *Rāmānand* rose in Benares and declared against the three great creeds of Hinduism,—namely priestdom, caste-system and idolatry. He declared against all *pujas*, sacrifices and worships,—he declared the universal brotherhood of man and love to God as the only means of salvation.

Another great man named *Goruk Nath* appeared in the Punjab; he reiterated all that was said and declared by *Rāmānand*: he preached against the priests, against the caste-system, against the multiplicity of gods. He too declared the universal brotherhood of man in the world below and one God in heaven above; but this God being unknowable by man, he declared that *Śiva* was the only god to be worshipped.

Still there was idolatry,—still there was complication and multiplicity,—still there was superstition and priestly bigotry,—still there were caste-system and a thousand other priestly tyrannies. A man rose from the lowest stratum of the society to declare that universal love was the



her son in all the *Sastras*, and Sankar learnt at rapid strides. It is said that when he was only sixteen, he became master of all the philosophies and theologies. None there was so learned as he in all Malabar;—nay in all Deccan.

But the young scholar had already got a big idea into his head. He had already perceived the chaos that pervaded all through India in the matter of religion and philosophy. Nearly fifteen hundred years had rolled away into the unknowable womb of Time after the death of the great Budha: his simple and sublime religion had deteriorated and fallen into the abyss of superstition and bigotry; the old religion and philosophy of the Aryans had tried to raise up their heads; both sense and nonsense, religion and superstition, knowledge and ignorance, were struggling for supremacy in a sea of chaos. *Sankar* clearly saw through the darkness that reigned over the once-happy land of the *Rishis*; he felt for the most miserable state in which the once-glorious land of the *Aryas* had fallen. He determined to revive the light that was gone out; he resolved to clear out the thorny weeds that had covered the tree of knowledge,—he made up his mind to remove the rust from the weapon that would enable men to clear a passage through the jungle of ignorance to the land of bliss.

allow me to go away,—give me your permission; if not, I give myself up and I am drowned. I shall drown myself before your eyes." The poor mother marked the determined look of her son,—she had no other alternative. She consented, and *Sanlar* carried his mother on his back and safely reached the other side of the streamlet.

A few days after, *Sanlar* took farewell of his mother and left Malabar. There was none but his poor mother to weep and lament for his departure. He was an unknown and un-cared-for orphan boy,—who was there to enquire where he went away? Those, whose ears the piteous cries of his mother reached, cursed and called him names and walked away from his doors, never to enquire how the poor widow fared.

## [ 2 ]

FOR sixteen long years *Sanlar* roamed over India,—travelling as far north as the Himalayas, and visiting all the celebrated pilgrimages and seats of learning. His great mission-works are known by the name of "Conquests." He wrote Commentaries on almost all the celebrated works, amongst which his Commentaries on *Vedanta Philosophy*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagabâtgîtâ* might be

mentioned. Besides the Commentaries, he wrote innumerable original works in verses which are matchless in sweetness, melody and thought. Perhaps never in the history of any literature a stupendous writer like him is found. He began to write when he was only 16 years old,—an age in which the majority of men are known as mere boys; he lived only 16 years more, but within this short time he wrote Commentaries on almost all philosophical and theological works extant, and wrote innumerable original works.

This was not all. He went to all the celebrated seats of learning then in existence in India. He challenged the learned men to discussion and argued with them till he was able to convert them to his opinions. He searched for the celebrated Rishis and sages, haunted them out in the jungles and caves and converted them to his way of understanding *Sastras*. It is said that he did not leave a single scholar or sage unconverted; his philosophical conquests are unique in the world. Thus he created order out of chaos; thus he lighted up the land where there was darkness and disorder. Thus he brought out a religion from the depth of an ocean which was full of moss and reeds.

He did not allow the matter to rest here. Like the great Budha, he attempted to establish :

religious Order. Budha's monks are gone, but *Sankar's Sannyasis* are still to be found all over India. He established four great monasteries in four different parts of India,—one on the hill of *Sringagiri*, called *Saingagiri mat*, one at Dwarka, called *Saroda mat*, one at *Srikhetra*, called *Goburidhan mat* and one at *Hadorikasrama*, called *Joshi mat*. We should mention here that his disciples and the disciples of his disciples founded altogether ten *mats* and every *Sannyasi* worth the name must belong to one of these *mats*.

Thus *Sankar* passed sixteen years on mission works, visiting all parts of India, once only visiting the south to meet his mother when she was on her death bed. He finally went to Cashmere and passed the latter portion of his life in the *Sringagiri mat*. Only a few months before his death he went to the *Joshi mat* and thence he proceeded to *Kedar Nath*. There the great reformer, the matchless preacher and the wonderful philosopher died at the early age of thirty two to the greatest grief of his innumerable disciples and followers.

The unknown and uncared-for orphan boy sixteen years ago left his mother's hut in Malabar and went to carve out a new religion for humanity; he lived but sixteen years more, but sixteen years were sufficient to make his

name known and respected in every Indian household; sixteen years' works were sufficient to make the people deify him after his death. He is now known in India as the incarnation of *Shiva*. He is still the great light with the help of which the Hindu theology and philosophy are read and understood.

[ 3 ]

He who has carefully studied both the Hindu and Baudha *Sastras* cannot but come to the conclusion that *Sankar's* attempt was to save from final destruction the best gems of both the religions. In fact he tried to establish by his extraordinary intellectual powers that the essence of both the Hindu and Baudha religions are the same. He searched through all the Hindu philosophical systems to find out some similarity of the Budha's philosophy in them. He found it in *Vedanta* and some of the *Upanishadas*; he forthwith wrote Commentaries on these works, explaining them in the light of the Buddhistic philosophy. The great Budha declared that man by self-culture can attain Budhahood, *Sankar* explained that the teaching of the *Vedanta* philosophy is that man by self-culture can attain God head. He retained the

name of God to save his religion from atheism which was the out-come of the Buddhism. Budha's philosophy was based on the great philosophy of *Kapila*;—*Sankar's Vedanta* was also based on that of great *Kapila*. In fact a careful study of *Sankar's* Commentaries would clearly prove that he attempted to put the Hindu garb over the sublime and chaste philosophy of Gautam Budha.

*Sankar* not only tried to save the philosophy of the Budha, but he tried to save his grand Order of religious monks, which was disorganised out of recognition. He rejected much that was unnecessary and unsuited to the time, he introduced some new innovations which he considered absolutely necessary for the present circumstances of the society. A cursory view of *Sankar's* Order of *Sannyashi* would show that it is nothing but the old Budhistic Order revived in a new garb.

Thus retaining the best gems of the religion of the great Budha and writing elaborate and grand Commentaries on old works, *Sankar* virtually destroyed the last vestige of the crumbled down Buddhism in India. But he could not revive the religion of the pro-Budhistic Aryans, whose works he commented. That was a task beyond the powers of humanity. The religion of the Vedas and Upanishads, and the religion of Srikrishna —

which was the outcome of the Vedas and the Upanishads,—were as much gone down into oblivion by the sad havoc that the all-devouring Time made on them as the all-grand Buddhism. It was as much gone as the religion of the monks;—therefore *Sankar's* religion, though introduced as the religion of the old *Aryas*,—was naturally quite a different thing from that of the religion of the Vedas or the Upanishads.

But idolatry had taken such a strong hold of the people, of both the Buddhists and the Hindus, that even *Sankar* with all his great intellectual powers could not root it out from India. Perhaps he found it an impossible task, and therefore he thought it better to create some order out of the great disorder in which the people used to worship and adore idols. It is needless to say that considering the philosophy he preached, he could not have any faith in idol or hero-worship, but he did not declare a crusade against the popular religion. He rather adopted the popular beliefs, and in some of his *maths* he established the idols of *Sharaswati* (Goddess of Learning), *Siva* and others, evidently thinking that they could do no harm to men who had been freed from ignorance and would surely help men who were in ignorance in their attempt at self-culture.

Thus *Saukar* tried to pick out the gems of the philosophies and theologies of India; thus he tried to save the teachings of *Srikrishna* and the *Budha*; thus he tried to string up the best jewels of Buddhism and Hinduism. Perhaps he was the greatest preacher, and philosopher of India, next to Gautam Budha of *Kapilabostu*.







## RAMANUJA.

### [ 1 ]

**A**BOUT two hundred years after the death of *Sankar*, another great man rose to save the true religion from deterioration and death. Before the birth of *Sankar*, and some years after the death of *Budha*, the religion of *Siva* rose to be the most prominent religion in India. Innumerable works had been already written to sing the glory of *Siva* and his consort, hundreds

of temples had been built all over the country and many of the Budha *Stupas* had been converted into *Siva's* temples. With all his greatness *Saukar* could not steer clear out of this strong-hold of Saivism; he did not venture, and perhaps he was not strong enough, to declare a crusade against the religion of *Siva*; therefore as soon as he was dead, he was accepted as the incarnation of *Siva*, and his words and verses were quoted to strengthen the already strong Saivism.

Though *Saukar's* philosophy was accepted by the learned, his religion was not accepted by the masses. His great Order of *Sanyasa* remained as he founded it, but the teachings he taught disappeared into oblivion.

To destroy the superstitious Saivism which was prevalent in India from end to end, and to bring simplicity and sublimity into the unweildy mass of dogmas which were known to be Religion, — a great man was again born in Deccan. To save the religion that was founded in the north on the banks of the *Jamuna* and the *Ganges*, two men were born one after the other in the far south on the banks of the *Krishna* and the *Kaveri*.

This great man was *Ramannja*. He was born

at a place called Perumber ; his father's name was Keshaba and his mother was called Bhumi Devi. He was educated at Kanehipur in the Bejoynogore District and from that place he began to preach his new religion. Thence he went to a place called *Srirangam*,—where he lived for some years and wrote many works explaining his Religion and Philosophy.

He then started on a missionary tour, defeating on his way many learned men in philosophical discussions and converting them to his opinions. He thus took possession of many *Saiva* temples and introduced in these places the worship of *Vishnu*. The bitterness between the worshippers of *Vishnu* and *Siva* daily grew keener, till at last the king of *Srirangam* resolved to exterminate the *Vishnu* worshippers. *Ramanuja* barely escaped with his life and took shelter in the kingdom of *Karnat*, the king of which was a *Jaina*. But he managed to convert the king and to make him a *Vishnu* worshipper. The king built a great temple at a place, called *Jadaba*, where, *Ramanuja* lived for twelve years.

At last he was informed that his enemy, the king of *Srirangam*, was dead. He hastened to his own native land and passed the remainder portion of his life in religious devotions.

namely (1) cleaning the temple (2) gathering flowers &c. for worship &c. (3) worshipping the God (4) singing the name of the God and reading the *Sastras* and (5) lastly meditation, devotion &c.

Although *Ramanuja* rejected the philosophies of both *Sankar* and Budha, he apparently followed their methods of attaining salvation and establishing a religious Order. He followed *Sankar* almost to the letter in organizing his Order of disciples. He established a limited number of chief *Mats*, and the followers of his religion were bound to be attached to one or the other of these *Mats*. -But *Saivism* was a universal religion in India, whereas *Ramanuja's Vaisnavism* never attained to that position. *Sankar's Mat-System* has therefore become a universal system and is honoured and respected in every part of India. His *Mats* are still to be found all over the country; but it is was not the case with the Order that *Ramanuja* established. His religion never became popular in the north, and hardly there is one *Ramanuja mat* in the country of the *Jamuna* and the *Ganges*.

But still there are to be found innumerable *mats* and temples in the Deccan, founded by *Ramanuja* or by his disciples and followers. His is the chief religion followed by the people from the

Vindia Range in the north to the dark blue sea in the south. Millions of men and women follow his religion, and he is worshipped and adored by thousands and thousands of people as an incarnation of *Vishna*.



## RAMANAND

[ 1 ]

**S**IMULTANEOUSLY were three great men born in three different parts of the Northern India to preach sublimity and simplicity of religion. It was when the Mogul Empire was in its ascendancy,—when Jehangere and Sahjahan reigned in Delhi,—when the Mahomedan religion had faced the religion of the Hindus and both the religions had to yield to each other, that *Ramanand*, *Goruknath* and *Kabir* were born.

Some say that *Ramanand* was a disciple of *Ramanuja*, but as he was born some one hundred years after the birth of *Ramanuja*, it is not possible that he was a direct disciple of the great man of the Deccan. But he was surely a follower of *Ramanuja* in his religion;—he accepted his philosophy and tried to popularise the religion founded by him.

It is a pity that we know very little of the history of *Ramanand*; his biographers delighted in fables and myths and wrote more about some of his disciples than about him. But it is certain that *Ramanand* lived in Benares and from that holy city he began to preach his religion.

He did not create a new philosophy, his was not a new religion. If he did anything new,—it is his deification of the greatest hero known in India. It was he who deified *Rama* and introduced the worship of the great hero all over the northern India.

Any one, who will take the trouble to study his teachings, will come to the conclusion that his intention was to popularise the religion of *Ramanuja*. He did not write his books in Sanskrit as did *Sankar* and *Ramanuja*. All his works were written in the popular languages of the

in fact he did nothing new. If he did any thing as regards his Order of ascetics, it was only a few reformations in the Order founded by *Ramanuja*. These Orders were all founded after the great Order of Goutam Budha, and therefore whether they were founded by *Sankar*, *Ramanuja* or *Ramanand*, they had hardly anything new in them. Like the Order founded by *Sankar*, which contained ten chief *mats*, *Ramanand* fixed the number of his *mats* as seven. Each and every one of his followers was bound to be attached to one or the other of these seven *mats*. The regulations that were observed in these *mats* hardly differed from those of the *mats* of *Sankar*. They were and still are almost the same institutions ;—they differed only in their gods ; the ascetics of the *Sankar's mats* worship and adore *Siva* as their God, whereas those of the *Ramanand mats* worship and adore *Rama* as an incarnation of the god *Vishnu*. Both the *Saiva* and *Vaisnava mats* possess landed properties and are presided over by, *Mahants*. A stranger will never find out their differences so long he does not see the God that is worshipped in them. But we should mention that ascetics attached to the *Ramanuja mats* had to pass through a very rigid life of discipline and privation, whereas



the ascetics of the *Ramanand mats* have rather an easy life. In every way *Ramanand* tried to make his religion more popular and more simple; his sole aim was to make religion an easier affair than what the priests and philosophers made it.

*Ramanand* had twelve chief disciples; they were picked up from every caste, from the high caste Brahmin to the low caste *Chandal*. During his life-time and after his death these twelve celebrated men did more in spreading his religion than he could himself do. It is evident from the castes of his disciples that *Ramanand* did not recognise caste-system, and people of every caste and creed were received by him in open arms.

Each and everyone of these twelve disciples had left undestroyable foot-prints on the sands of time;—but one of them perhaps surpassed his own master and teacher. He perhaps became a greater man than what *Ramanand* was,—he perhaps was much more blessed with the celestial fire than any of his colleagues or even his great Teacher. It was great *Kabir*; but before we narrate his life, we must briefly mention four other great men who were considered lesser men in the following of *Ramanand*, but who were

perhaps, if not greater but equally great amongst the twelve great disciples of *Ramanand*.

[ 3 ]

ONE of these four is *Naraji*, the celebrated author of *Bhaktamal*. The next is *Shuradas*, the greatest ballad writer and songster that was ever born in India. The next two are matchless poets—now known all over the civilised world. One is *Tulsidas*, the author of the Hindi *Ramayana* and the other is *Joydeb*, the prince of lyric poesy.

*Naraji* was born in a very low caste family; he was abandoned by his mother in the time of a deadly famine and was left in the wood. He was found by two *Vaisnava* ascetics, who took him to their *mat*; and there the future author of the most celebrated biographical work that was ever written in northern India, was brought up.

When he grew up he was attached to the *mat* and became a disciple of *Ramanand*. It is said that he wrote *Bhaktamal* by the request of his master and teacher. *Naraji* was not only a poet of an extraordinary character, but he was himself a saint, and his love towards God and saints was unexemplary in the annals of India.

We know very little of *Shuradas*. It is known

that he was blind and was the most popular poet of his age. His tomb is to be found at a place called Shibpur near Benares. It is said that he was born in a Brahmin family and was for some time a Collector of revenue under the Mogul Emperor. But he gave away all the revenue to God *Madanmohan* in *Brindabana* and sent boxes filled with stones to the Imperial Court. He was thrown into the prison by Raja *Todermaal*, but was set free by Akbar, for the Emperor took him for a mad man. However *Shuradas* became a *Vaisnava* ascetic and roamed over the country, composing and singing innumerable songs and ballads which breathed the fire of love and spirit of heaven.

*Tulsidas* was born in a Brahmin family at a place called *Hajpur* near *Chitrakut* Hill. He became the Dewan of the king of Benares, but at last became an ascetic and went to *Brindabana*. After travelling over many places he returned to Benares and wrote his celebrated *Ramayana*. He wrote some other works also, and passed the remainder of his life in the holy city of the Hindus.

*Joydeva* was born at a place called *Kendabilla* in the Western Bengal. Perhaps he is the greatest lyric poet of India. He was a very poor man,

but at last he was forced to marry a girl whose father left her at the door of his poor hut. He lived a devotional life in his own native village, but his sweet *Gita Govinda* was read and sung all over India from the mountains to the sea.

Thus *Ramanand's* religion spread all over the country; his disciples roamed over India and preached his religion amongst the masses; his four great poet-disciples did perhaps more to spread his religion by their poesy and songs than any of his other followers. Thus within a very short period *Ramanand's*, *Vaisnavism*, or it would be better to call his worship of *Rama*, became the most popular religion of India. Although he and his disciples recognised the other incarnations of *Vishnu*, they gave prominence to that of *Rama* and even to-day the major portion of his followers are the worshippers of *Rama* and his consort *Sita* and their friend the celebrated monkey-god *Hanuman*. *Ramanand* gave a heavy blow to *Saivaism*, though supported by the grand poesy and grander philosophy of *Sankar*, and even to-day his *Baisnavism* are to be found all over the Northern India.





## KABIR.

### [ 1 ]

**K**ABIR went further in making the religion more simple and sublime than what his master and teacher, *Ramanand*, could do. *Ramanand* tried to keep to the rituals as much as was consistent with his principles, but *Kabir* went thoroughly against all rituals and all formalities. His religion was a religion of simplicity, his motto was love and his means of salvation was devotion to God and God alone.

The life of *Kābir* is covered with mystery. We know almost nothing of his life and career. We have his teachings, collected in many works which were written and composed in the most popular language. His popular verses are repeated even to-day in almost every house-hold from the frontier of Bengal to that of the Punjab. The events of his life have sunk into oblivion, but his sweet, instructive and devotional verses are never to be forgotten.

It is said that he was born of a Bramhin girl-widow, who to hide her shame left him in a jungle. Here was he found by an weaver, named *Nuri*, who was going with his wife to attend an invitation in a neighbouring village. The couple took compassion on the forsaken baby: they took him to their home and there they brought him up as their own child.

We know nothing of him till he became a disciple of *Ramanand*. It is evident that from his very boyhood he was a sort of religious maniac. Though his foster father got him married, yet he was not very much attached to home and family. He used to roam over the holy city of Benares, and one day he forgot to return home and passed the night on the steps of one of the *ghauts* of the holy Ganges.

When he was thus sleeping on the steps of the *ghaut*, the great preacher and devotee, *Ramanand*, came to bathe where he was asleep. It was still dark, and the great teacher did not see the sleeping *Kabir* and placed his foot upon his breast. As soon as he found that he had trod upon a human body, he cried out "*Rama, Rama.*" *Kabir* started up and cried out "I have found it at last."

*Ramanand* marked the peculiarity of the man, brought him to his *mat* and there on that very day *Kabir* was formally initiated into the religion of the great teacher. We do not know how long *Kabir* remained true to the religion of his *Guru*. Most likely he began to preach his own religion after the death of his master. Whatever be the fact, within a very short time *Kabir* became a greater man than *Ramanand*, and his religion became more powerful than any religion then in existence in India,

He passed the remainder portion of his life in preaching his religion, but his system of preaching was novel. He did not preach, but sang his religion in popular verses: his teachings were all told in songs and ballads, he never asked any body to follow him, but roamed over the country singing his songs which condemned,

all formalities and all ritualism. He had no caste, no creed; he had no worship, no adoration; he had no idols, no mythology;—he sang the praise of God and God alone. He boldly declared the universal brotherhood of man and the uselessness of all religions. His creed was love,—love to Nature and Nature's objects, and from Nature's objects to Nature's God.

## [ 2 ]

THERE are innumerable tales and fables told about *Kabir*, but many of them are undoubtedly the creations of his admirers, but one of these stories are told by all his biographers and can be cited as a side-light to his great character.

*Kabir* used to live with his wife *Loi* in a grove outside the city, and the only work that he used to do was to feed the ascetics and devotees who used to come to his hut. But he was a beggar himself and often had to face the want of means to perform his favourite avocations. One day he had nothing,—but he had a score of hungry ascetics and beggars at his door. He was very moody and a little restless. His good wife marked his down-cast look and asked the reason of his anxiety. *Kabir* told



torrents. "My sweet love," said he, "I never expected to meet you to-night. How have you come here in such storm and rain? How have you come,—you are not drenched,—you have not a bit of mud in your feet;" "Sir," replied the devotee's wife, "My husband has carried me on his shoulder." "Your husband!" cried the youngman, "Your husband has brought you to me!"

He fell at her feet, called her his mother and ran towards the place where *Kabir* was standing. We need not say, from that day the hanker's son became one of the most devoted followers of the great man.

[ 3 ]

AFTER a life of devotion, *Kabir* passed away at a place, called *Magar*. He might be called *the* son of the great God; he was not of one religion or of one nation; his home was the Universe, his brother was mankind and his great father was the father of Heaven. Therefore when he died his body was claimed by both the Hindus and the Mohamedans;—the two creeds that were at loggerheads since they met on the land of the five rivers. No greater proof of his spirituality could there be, than the fact of Manomedans' and Hindus' claiming his body as their own.

It is said that there would have been a great battle fought between the Hindus and the Mahomedans over his body,—the king of Benares with thousands of Hindus wanting to burn the body, and Bizli Khan with thousands of Mahomedans wanting to bury it. But it is said that at this crisis *Kabir's* apparition appeared and asked the assembled Hindus and Mahomedans to take off the cloth that covered the corpse. It was done, and a large quantity of flowers were seen under it.

Half of the flowers were then, taken by the king of Benares and burnt on the bank of the holy Ganges. The ashes were then buried and a *mat* was raised at a place which is known by the name of *Kabir Choura*, the great pilgrimage of the followers of *Kabir*. The other half of the flowers was taken by Bizli Khan and was buried at *Magar*, where he died. A mosolum was raised over the grave and it is still considered as one of chief pilgrimages of the Mahomedans. Never in the world's history the same man has been thus deified by two great antagonistic religions.

We now quote one two of the moral precepts of *Kabir*.

1. The life is passed in turning the bead,—but the darkness of the heart is not destroyed.

Leave off turning the beads in your hand, but turn the heads of your mind.

2. The man who has travelled as far as Haridwar, carried torn clothes weighing two maunds and roamed over the country seeing various pilgrimages, has gained nothing if he has no devotion to God. The man who has gone to *Kaba*, and made his obsecence there, but has not destroyed the hypocrisy of his mind and has no devotion, has gained nothing by seeing the holy *Kaba*. The man who has read *Bosta* and *Golistha*, but has not understood the lies of *Sandi*, has gained nothing by being a great scholar.

3. I am fond of the words of my sweet-heart (God) and my mind gets no consolation if anybody tries to console me in other ways. If you make the fish lie on a golden cot and give him ambrosia to drink, it is sure to die in no time. The diamond seeker can only understand the value of the diamond. *Kabir* says he, who has gained devotion, can only get God.